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HENRY HOLBEACH

IN TWO VOLUMES

"I desire it may be considered that in this treatise I have argued upon the principles of others, which I do not believe, and have omitted a thing of the utmost importance, which I do believe—the moral fitness and unfitness of actions prior to all will whatever."

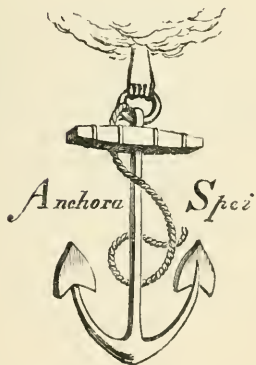
BISHOP BUTLER—"Analogy"—*Last Chapter.*

HENRY HOLBEACH

Student in Life and Philosophy

A Narrative and a Discussion

VOL. I.



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HENRY HOLBEACH.

First Words by the Editor.

THE task which has fallen to me of editing certain papers of Mr Henry Holbeach, is not an easy one, even though for performing it I have, in miscellaneous manuscripts and otherwise, resources which are not exhibited to the reader. I feel that some notion of the man himself will be a help to the understanding of his writings, and yet I scarcely know where to begin, or what to withhold.

Since the effect of a first glance at a book is so important, considered as attractive or deterring to the reader, I cannot, perhaps, do better, to begin with, than guard Mr Holbeach against a misapprehension to which, I fear, he was sometimes exposed. The occasional eagerness of his manner may possibly make a few

people think him arrogant. But no man was less so. Indeed, he is always tender in guarding his phraseology ; says, "I think"—"it appears to me," and so on ;—often in so many words, always by implication. This is a fact, lying upon the surface of his style. He himself used to say, in justifying others, Mr Ruskin among them, "Eagerness and warmth of assertion do not constitute arrogance. It is arrogance to write or speak as if the listener or reader was bound to think with you ; and nothing else is arrogance. It is generally the calm, complacent writers who are truly egotistic ; rarely the impassioned ones."

I must candidly say, as a matter of criticism, that dogmatism seems to me almost incompatible with the accents of hesitation and allowance, which make themselves heard in these coy Discussions ; and I am quite sure, as a matter of fact, that no man could possibly leave others more free than my friend habitually did. Upon your assent he never made any demand whatever ; nor did he understand how such demands could be made by others, however softened by that cheerful, genial give-and-take which goes so near to beautify human intercourse upon ordinary levels. "I notice," he used to say, "that a good many people find it difficult to offer you friendship or kindness without

imposing tacit conditions, and putting you in livery ; but it is a great pity that this should be so."

From the frequent recurrence of certain turns of phrase about "rights" in these papers, it must not be supposed that there was anything *clamorous* in the tone of the writer's mind. "I hate mere advocacy," he would say: "I must keep a pet prejudice or two for my soul's health, and now and then I must indulge in a regardless *plaidoyer*. But not often ; and when I do, I take care to give myself and others due notice. I know when I am pleading ; and as soon as I have done, I say to myself, 'There, that was exercise for your muscles ; but remember you were one-sided all the while.'"

I should say that a profound self-distrust was at the bottom of all Mr Holbeach's apparent egotisms. Such a man would have so little tact and energy in protecting himself in the actual conflicts of life, that he would be quite likely to feel, with intense and even agonising acuteness, the necessity, which he is always harping upon, of *definition* of Rights, and of a thoroughly understood freedom of action. Most people protect themselves by mere tact, mingled with good-nature. Mr Holbeach had good-nature ; and one who had reason to know used to say, he "would give away his

head if you'd let him ;" but he had no more tact than a baby. Probably he knew his own secret ; for here is a specimen of the sort of speech I have heard him make :—"It is an awkward thing not to be able to order the servant to bring in a candle, or to give a friend advice, without feeling that you are a tyrant and usurper ; and I shall never be comfortable till I can get up some of the instinctive self-importance which carries others over the heads of the little conflicts of life."

These little conflicts were the especial horror of Mr Holbeach. He used to call them brutalities, vulgarities, and other names uglier than I need quote. He would say :—"Competition is brutal. I would at any time rather retire from the field than do the trumpery little elbowing-work which I see going on all around me." It is matter of fact, known to me, that he often did so retire. "There are two kinds of egotism," said he ; "there is the egotism of self-assertion by conflict with others ; and there is the egotism of self-assertion to one's own self. I prefer the latter, and so avoid being forced by the heats of conflict into petty intrigue, or coarse injustice. I do not condemn *your* choice ; but cannot you leave me mine ?"

It has been said of Shelley that he would fearlessly

have gone and preached monogamy and republicanism to the Grand Turk, and when an order came to bowstring him, would have exclaimed, in sincerest wonder, "Bowstring me! *what for?*" My friend Holbeach was just such another. Once, when very young indeed, he wrote and circulated in a school an essay against that kind of competition for prizes, known as "emulation." He had made up his mind that the system was an ignoble one, and he acted in that way upon his conviction. The conviction he always retained; but later in life he disapproved of his interference in that case with what was, he now thought, no business of his. Indeed, I never quite understood his views upon the subject of Controversial Action and Reaction. But they were very peculiar, and tended to keep him out of all aggressive movements and organisations.

Mr Matthew Arnold, in one of his essays, has said something upon the function of the critical, or *judging* intellect, which Mr Holbeach very heartily approved, and which, following naturally, as it does, in the track of my last few paragraphs, I propose to quote for the reader's kind attention:—

"To act is so easy, as Goethe says; to think is so hard! It is true that the critic has many temptations

to go with the stream, to make one of the party of *movement*; it seems ungracious to refuse when so many excellent people consent; but the critic's duty is to refuse; or, if resistance is vain, at least to cry with Obermann—*Périssons en résistant!* How is Criticism to be *disinterested*? By keeping aloof from practice; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches; by steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them. The notion of the free play of the mind upon all subjects being a pleasure in itself, being an object of desire, being an essential provider of elements without which a nation's spirit, whatever compensations it may have for them, must, in the long run, die of inanition, hardly enters into an Englishman's thoughts. It is noticeable that the word *curiosity*, which in other languages is used in a good sense to mean, as a high and fine quality of man's nature, just this disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects for its own sake; it is noticeable, I say, that this word has in our language no sense of the kind; no sense but a rather bad and disparaging one. But criticism, real criticism,

is essentially the exercise of this very quality; it obeys an instinct, prompting it to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind, and to value knowledge and thought as they approach this best, without the intrusion of any other considerations whatever. This is an instinct for which there is, I think, little original sympathy in the practical English nature. The critic must keep out of the region of immediate practice in the political, social, humanitarian sphere, if he wants to make a beginning for that more free speculative treatment of things, which may perhaps one day make its benefits felt even in this sphere, but in a natural, and thence irresistible, manner. Do what he will, however, the critic will still remain exposed to frequent misunderstandings, and nowhere more than in this country. For here people are particularly indisposed even to comprehend, that without this free disinterested treatment of things truth and the highest culture are out of the question."

These fine passages exemplify, much better than I could do it, a sort of comment upon literature and society which was frequent with Mr Holbeach, and is certainly fatal to any idea of arrogant *intent*. "It

is almost impossible, anywhere," he would say, "either in life, or in literature, to get this free play of thought allowed. Harness here, harness there, harness everywhere! The harnessing is useful where hard, practical work has to be done, but it *should* be possible to interchange ideas, upon neutral platforms, with serene irrespectiveness of these vulgarities."

This must not be taken as an indication that my friend was desirous of affecting any insensibility to practical necessities. One who knew him well, said, in my hearing, "Holbeach, with all your idealisms, you are the most matter-of-fact man I ever knew, and if you were to live with me long, I should shoot you for your hard-headedness!" But I think that my friend used to feel that good men and women were kept *unduly* apart by the necessities of "harness," (of different kinds;) and he made a half-playful attempt to exemplify, in visible fact, the sort of neutral platform which appeared to him desirable in social intercourse. "Let the honest Bohemians of Ideas," said he, "make little worlds of their own; the Bohemians of Ideas are *Puritan* Bohemians; and why shouldn't they have a club—the Puritan Bohemian Club!"

The picture which, at times when he spoke like

this, was present to the mind of my friend was, I suppose, something like that of the *salon* or *conversazione*,—only realised “out of society.” Not, of course, physically out of society, but upon a basis of mutual understanding which set conscience free from the restraints of the mutual exactions made plausible, if not necessary, by “harness.” An attempt was actually made to found a Puritan Bohemian Club,—a loosely-jointed sort of association which had a very small solid nucleus, and very large skirts of nebulosity. There was a parent club; and there were branches. There was such a thing as membership; but nobody knew who the members were, or how many there were of them. “Let us meet at each other’s houses,” said the Founder, “and let us keep no books of record—or *if we do, let us keep them incorrectly.*”

The essential condition of membership was understood to be, that the person seeking admission should have some point of conscience upon which he and the majority of outsiders did not concur in opinion, and should profess to be prepared to stand, at all risks, by that point of conscience. This made the Puritan,—namely, the honest point of conscience. Then the antagonism of idea made the Bohemian. It was a

rule of the Club that not even the most intimately known members were bound to recognise each other in "society," except under the usual conditions. The members were all enrolled under names assumed for purposes of independent association, and those only,—club purposes in fact. Then there were Open Evenings, when the Club was understood to be at home to all the world, whether members or not. An extraordinary sort of metaphysical masked ball,—widely diverse people, from the four winds, meeting together under all manner of assumed names, with no very definable understanding except that they were not to steal the spoons or make themselves disagreeable. On an open evening at the Club, you might chance to meet Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, M. Proudhon, M. Pierre Leroux, Herr Pastor Schleiermacher, Mr John Milton, Mr John Locke, Mr Thomas Hobbes, M. Auguste Comte, Madame George Sand, General Garibaldi, and—nobody knows whom besides. On one occasion a spoon *was* stolen, and there was considerable excitement upon the subject. It was immediately said that the enterprise had stultified itself; and the excitement was not allayed until Mr Holbeach confessed to having stolen the spoon himself, "as an argumentative experiment," said he; "for if nature

is to be questioned, according to Bacon, why not *human* nature?" This was, perhaps, cogent; but my friend had a narrow escape of being given into custody.

It is for a good reason that I have said this much about the Puritan Bohemian Club; for it was at one of its meetings that I first made the acquaintance of Mr Holbeach. The acquaintance, begun under favourable auspices, rapidly ripened into a very intimate friendship, and I am thus enabled to offer an account of the man, which, however meagre, will help to make his writings more intelligible.

One of the first things I ever heard Mr Holbeach say was, "If I had a large fortune, I would spend half of it in building model houses for poor people, and half in stultifying Acts of Parliament that attempt impossible interferences with private conduct." Of course this was random talk, but it was characteristic enough. The first thing that struck me about him was the dislike he had to force. I could not conceive him bringing an action, or giving a man in charge, or doing a score of things which come into the ordinary routine of citizenship. At bottom he was quite sane and quite practical on all such matters, and never meddled, except in the way of "free criticism;" but

that criticism always leaned to the resisting side. It was his hatred of the idea of applying force that made him so anxious to have rights defined. I suppose all he means is this—"In order that we may have no quarrelling, let us know the *minimum*; the thing we may in justice insist upon if a difficulty should arise." His dread of a quarrel was extreme, inexpressible. I believe he would have escaped into another planet, if he could, to avoid an angry face. Yet, I must add that, allowance being made for infirmity of sudden passion, I believe it would have been impossible to terrify him into wrong-doing. It is my faith that he was, upon any point of conscience, quite capable of resisting a world in arms, even though he stood utterly alone. His chief dread, he told me, was of such physical pain as involved laceration or rending; but his religious training had made him familiar, from almost infancy, with the idea of suffering for truth's sake. "One of my first recollections," he once said to me, "is of crying bitterly at a sermon about being crucified to the world. I took it all at the foot of the letter, and, not unnaturally, wept at the idea of being tortured, though I felt that I had nothing to do *but* be crucified if that was my duty."

This brings me at once to the subject of the Puritan breeding of Mr Holbeach, which was, as I gather, of the most pronounced and unrelaxing kind. I should say that, though on the whole, perhaps, beneficent, its influence on my friend had been far from exclusively so. It is hard to say,—I scarcely know,—but probably most of my readers would decide that he had, even when I knew him, a conscience too eager to accept responsibility. Many of us feel uneasy at passing a crossing-sweeper without giving him a coin, but if my friend had not got a coin in his pocket, he would apologise, and promise one. This was all very well, and was certainly done in simplicity of heart; but such a promise would be a burthen upon the mind, and the keeping of it might entail undue fatigue of body, which would lead to the neglect of something more important. It would not be easy, perhaps, to describe his conscience better than by saying it was over-eager; and he himself attributed this to the Puritan breeding, falling upon such a character as his.

But here is another little anecdote of his childhood. In a certain chapel little Henry, one Sunday, managed to “twiddle” or fumble off one of the knots or tassels of the cushion that covered the seat in the pew.

Horror-stricken at the crime, he carried off the knot or button, and hid it away somewhere. But his conscience made him wretched. That button, small matter as it was, was yet property, and he felt he was bound to confess his crime and give it up. At last, after much self-torture, he one day burst into tears at his mother's knee, and told her he had a sin for which to ask forgiveness of God. When, with great effort, he had told his mother all, she, poor soul, burst out laughing; but still, seeing that the little fellow's heart was really touched, she listened patiently to his sorrows, and promised to obtain his pardon from the minister. Nor would Harry go to chapel again on "ordinance-Sabbath," (it was a great act of self-denial on his part to absent himself,) until he received assurance of pardon in the shape of a gift from the minister. The gift was a pomegranate; and Harry was taken up from bed, at nine o'clock in the evening, to receive it. Such was his joy that he first of all read a chapter in a Bible which he always had under his pillow, and—then had a game at nine-pins on a tea-tray placed upon the bed for him! This gives me some idea how very young he was at the time; but he told me he perfectly remembered an ink-blot, like a note of admiration, (!) just under the

word "extol," somewhere in the Psalms, where he read on that night.

There is another little story, more to his credit than the foregoing, perhaps, and equally illustrative of an over-eager conscience. One day he was out of doors flinging stones with other children. At last a window was broken, and the boy that flung the stone was seized and reprimanded, the remainder of the troop running away, and among them Harry. But this would not do for him; and the next day he went straight to the man whose window had been broken, and said, "Sir, I did not throw the stone that broke your window, but I was one of the boys that were setting a bad example."

At the time this occurred, little Harry was not seven years old. But there are, as it appears to me, good reasons for my mentioning trifles of the kind in the opening of my present task. One of them is, that they really tend to throw some light upon the methods of my friend's mind. He often appears to embarrass his own course of thought by his almost fanatical way of allowing the utmost that he can to his opponent. His use of parenthetical and qualifying words is surely excessive; but such anecdotes as the above will help the reader to understand that Mr

Holbeach had really an eager desire to be just : which, perhaps, often frustrates itself. He would say—“When I do or say anything unusual in the breadth of its allowance, people either totally mistake my meaning, or else they think I have what they call a motive. Anyhow, they don’t understand.” He used to pride himself, if it can fairly be said that he was proud, upon his capacity of stating an opponent’s case for him. “You need not draw out the argument ; I can do it for you !” I once asked him if he had read Barelay’s “Apology for the Quakers.” He answered, “No ; but I will discuss it, if you like, in such a way that you shall believe I *have* read it !” This was half fun, but the other half was quite serious.

Shortly after I first met him an accident confirmed our acquaintance. I was in the chair at a place where he was lecturing. It was the custom of that place that a vote of thanks should be given to the speaker of the evening. I deliberately broke through the custom, in perfect reliance upon Mr Holbeach. My reliance was not misplaced ; he quite understood me, and heartily thanked me. “Praise and blame,” he used to say, “are welcome when they arrive *informally* and spontaneously. But the man who can submit to a vote of

thanks would—press you to take half a cup more at tea!” Here again, he was, at bottom, quite sane and practical, and willingly entered into all little matters of compliment and civility, when the level of the intercourse presupposed the need for them; but, praise being often as unjust as blame, he liked to have it indefinite and informal when he could.

Thus, my course of conduct upon the vote of thanks question pleased him, and brought us closer together, so that, by degrees I came to know a good deal of him. I gather, from a comparison of his papers with things said by him which I remember, that he attributed some of his shyness, and his preference for remote and independent lines of action, to his Puritan breeding. “One of my very earliest recollections,” he would say, “is of kneeling down in a darkened room while my mother prayed aloud. In the morning, at noon, and again at night, that was her custom, and the habit of engaging in devout exercises three times a day has never left me; is a habit which no preoccupation ever breaks through. When I was a little boy, it had upon me a deeply solemnising influence of a *diffused kind*. The effect upon my mind did not cease with the hour. As I was such a meditative little fellow, my whole day used to be serious—

the devout mood never having time to subside. Consequently, I had really little desire for childish sports—which was bad for me in soul and body too. But, besides that, I have a recollection which is even *horribly* vivid of the pain which other boys used to cause me when I played with them, and entered into their little designs; as I did, in spite of being much discouraged from playing. They did not seem to me *fair*, and I used to be always telling them so. Boys are, of course, like men. They want to harness you; make you join in all their injustices; and, in a word, be instrumental to their ends. In return they are ready enough to be instrumental to yours, *if they understand them, or if you happen to have any*. But I was never easy, and never shall be easy, in this sort of implied compact; which always runs into tyrannies, falsehoods, and revenges. It is thus that the business of the world (as it is called) is got through, and I have nothing to say about it, except that I am unfit for it. Finding that the unfitness shuts me out of a great many sources of pleasure, and means of communicating pleasure, I have tried hard to overcome what I have sometimes supposed to be my own defect. But the trial has always ended in vexation not only for myself, but for others.”

In all this, I think my friend allowed far too little for the restraining effects of a naturally capricious *physique*, made more capricious still by the asceticisms of his studious years. He was quite aware that he was deficient in the faculty of elastic resistance which is so common and so helpful; and he was of opinion that such a training as he had received when young was highly calculated to stifle any germs of such a faculty that might have shown themselves in his boyhood. "Unless when I play the humorist," he would say, "there is no *elastic* resistance about me. It was the misfortune of my first years that all that was strong in me necessarily took the shape of *revolt*, and thus I acquired cantankerous habits of mind in the mere struggle to be something like other children. As for my adolescence, who could describe it? who could describe my earliest manhood? I was as unfit for actual life as if I had walked straight out of fairy-land into Holborn. The image is not too strong; it is not strong enough."

Omitting a passage or two, strictly personal, in respect to which the memoranda before me supplement my recollections of what he used to say, I think I will here allow my friend to continue in his own words:—

"I wish to be true to my own principles. I stand

for a non-interfering criticism, and justice all round. So I do not blame any one ; certainly not Puritanism. It so happened, indeed, that my nurture did not, as I believe, suit me ; but another kind of nurture might have suited me worse ; and, in any case, I shall be loyal to my nest. If I am forced to be a partisan, I will always take the Puritan side against its enemies ; and I have to declare, that in the Puritan camp I have been allowed to speak more of the truth than in any other camp whatsoever. The Puritan conscience is stronger and greater than the Puritan intolerance, and, somehow, works itself free of much that clogs it. So great is the force of a pure intent. Yet, such was the effect of the Puritan breeding upon myself, that I had to get at my manliness by struggles in which I lost a good deal of blood,—it had been packed so far down in my life's *viaticum*, under such a heap of false impressions ! Truths which to others are, from the first, common as stones in the street, came to me by the cataclysmic method.

“ These things are not sentiment ; they are stubborn fact. When her mad freak after the wedding was over, Undine, wiping away her tears, and looking earnestly at the priest said, ‘ There must be something lovely, but at the same time something most awful,

about a soul. In the name of God, holy man, were it not better that we never shared a gift so mysterious? Already its approaching image overshadows me with anguish and mourning.' Well do I remember when the 'approaching image,' not, indeed, of a soul, but of the fresh influences that were to make me almost as much another person as Undine after the wedding, 'overshadowed me with anguish and mourning.' The world's psychological statist has yet to be born. *When* he appears and makes out his talks, we shall, no doubt, be able to calculate a man's life-battles beforehand for him as easily as we can now calculate an occultation or an eclipse. But in the meantime, we must each go his own way, and take his own chance. The time came, however, when I saw, at one flash, from the highest turret to the lowest keep of life. In that hour it was given to me to know what I had been, what I might have been, and what it remained for me to seek to be. It was an hour, not of pride, but of deep humiliation. Yet I felt that I had stretched out my hand, and received a talisman, and, wander or not wander, I have never let it go."

As there was really nothing highflown about Mr Holbeach, I suppose this "talisman" means *trust*, founded upon an all-embracing view of life; such as

was not possible to him until some of the hindrances which he attributes to his early culture were cleared away.

Of his *general* culture I will say but little. So far as emotional experience goes, he had, I think, been carried the whole of the ordinary human round, but with (in one or two particulars) extraordinary force. He had in that way nothing to learn *in kind*. "Love of God!" exclaims some sceptic. "How would you feel about the love of God if you were in the embrace of a boa-constrictor?" It is a horrible question; and my friend used to feel, with humility and anguish, his own unfitness to encounter certain forms of pain; but such questions did not, I feel sure, shake his mind. "Others can bear up under rack and thumbscrew," said he, "if I cannot. But my own little capacity of endurance is a divine spark too; and, I believe, seeking help in heaven and in earth for my unbelief."

Of general knowledge of men and life Mr Holbeach had, I should think, as much as could well fall to the lot of a half-valetudinarian student. His own position, and, indeed, his history, seem to me to have been rather favourable for general observation; and, at the time I knew him, he declined nothing that was honest and decent. The "common people" he was well ac-

quainted with. Places of public resort he was very fond of. "A massive wave of sympathy," he would say, "is delightful. When I was younger my knowledge of this wonderful world was confined to what I could guess from books. If it had not been for 'Gil Blas,' which showed me something of average human nature, I should have perished from not understanding life at all. Now I know what it is, I like to take in human sympathy in large draughts,—a great gulp at a time,—such as you get from an excited crowd."

Of my friend's culture in other particulars, each reader of the book will judge for himself. It remains for me to explain how the task of editing the papers of Mr Holbeach comes to be confided to me.

One of the institutions of the P. B. Club was a certain letter-box called, after Steele, I believe, the LION'S MOUTH. Into this box were dropped communications of the most extraordinary kind—letters from and to all manner of men, women, children, and ghosts, which were from time to time taken out, and read at our meetings. It was especially a receptacle for the communications of members to each other *as* members. One day I found in the LION'S MOUTH a letter addressed to me, in which Mr Holbeach told me that he was suddenly called to a new sphere of

activity, which would, for some time, as effectually cut him off from old paths as if he had gone to the "remote Bermudas, unespied." But he had some papers which he desired should be edited and printed by a dispassionate friend ; and he wished me to undertake the task, leaving me absolutely free to say whatever pleased me about him or his paper, and to make just the arrangement or selection I pleased.

"One of the great heroic Napiers," said my friend, "I think it was Sir Charles, was dining with his family in hugger-mugger fashion, in a house that was for some domestic reason out of order. A visitor knocked at the door, and asked for him. 'Not at home,' said the servant, obeying orders. 'Why,' answered the rude visitor, 'I saw him through the window-blind!' Napier, overhearing this, put his head out at the door, and said, 'I tell you, sir, I am *not* at home!' The moral," continued Holbeach, "is this, that, for some time forward, I am not at home for the ordinary purposes of life ; but as I wish my papers to be printed, I put you as nearly as possible in the place of another self, and charge you with the task of editing them."

In going over the papers of Mr Holbeach, I came to the conclusion that injustice would be done to the

discussions which they contain, if no attempt, such as I have now begun, were made to accompany them with a narrative sketch, or *servir-pour-memoire* of the writer. Amongst the papers now published will be found a study of an obscure nonconformist colony. I gather that my friend's first lot in life was cast among some good people, who formed a transplanted branch of this colony. He appears to think half the energy of his most vivid years was wasted in the hazardous struggle to make real to himself the world as it existed outside the colony, when he found himself forced to enter that world. No doubt, a shy, imaginative person must have suffered something, and blundered somewhat; but after all, effort is discipline, unless it be too violent. Very violent, however, must have been the effort which could at all reconcile life and duty as they seem, from the "study" in question, to have first shown themselves to my friend, with life and duty as they finally took shape before his eyes. The results of the effort, so far as an arduous life seems to have permitted him to exhibit them, are before us.

I call the attention of the reader to the first study or two, as supplying a useful key. A German gentleman assures me he perceives my friend's struggles

began with a revolt from a kind of life which aimed at the Right without aiming at the Beautiful. For my part I will not venture on metaphysics; but there seems sense in that; and, of course, every man must have *some* point of departure when he strikes out, as each of us must, a path of his own, (since no man can walk in another's.) Mr Holbeach would, I think, agree with the German gentleman, and would say, "The nobleness and the beauty are facts. Your scheme of things must not only have room for them, it must be such a scheme as could be inferred from the nobleness and the beauty. There is no isolated truth: it is all dovetailing. One bone of the great universal creature is enough for the sincere student. He can construct it wholly from that fragment. Break up the great puzzle as often as you like, it can still be hypothetically put together again. Once really *know*, by waiting on the truth, the piece that you hold in your hand, you can then discover exactly what pieces are missing."

It will be observed that Mr Holbeach does not go beyond saying, you can *tell* what pieces are missing. He does not add that unaided human nature can supply all the blanks. I feel that particular attention should be paid (by any one who thinks him worth

reading at all) to what he does *not* say ; for I notice a constant effort on his part to allow the very utmost possible to the other side of an argument ; and, whatever the argument may be, never to travel, as lawyers say, *ultra vires*. For a brief summary or expository Index to these Discussions, I refer the reader to my own Last Words, at the end of the second volume. In the meanwhile, I simply classify the papers before me as (I.) *Studies in Life, Literature, and Philosophy* ; and (II.) *Controversial Letters*.

I would, once again, request that Mr Holbeach may not be misjudged in respect to any of his rapid, over-idiomatic passages. I have endeavoured to write with cautious reserve of so near a friend, (for near he is ;) but upon one point I will be decided and unreserved. My friend, I repeat it, had no dogmatism, no arrogance, no controversial untenderness. "I seek," said he, "to pass my life in the shadow of other men's goodness and greatness ; always maintaining, for others as well as myself, the Inviolability of Conviction." The most "cantankerous" things, he says, may easily be rendered into the dialect of the poet-critic, whose words I have already quoted. "There is a want," says Mr Holbeach, for so I read him, "of an independent and disinterested sphere of mutual criticism

in life and in literature. Let us try and exemplify the possibility of supplying the want. Nothing is of any value to which practice cannot be adjusted ; but practical necessities, if we set up no breakwater of thought, will eat the soul out of things, just as the sea washes away the land."

Our little Club of Puritan Bohemians is, I have already observed, an attempt to create a neutral platform for "disinterested criticism;" but of that I have spoken enough for the present. Mr Holbeach proposes, at a future time, to publish extracts from its Proceedings, and Sketches of Some of the Members ; but, of course, the design is as uncertain as other human things. In the meanwhile I have to apologise for this introductory notice, which, from my desire to be simply explanatory and truthful, has, I fear, proved coldly meagre : but I could not venture to warm the page with a single sentence of either praise or blame.

STUDIES IN LIFE, LITERATURE, AND
PHILOSOPHY.

I.

A STUDY OF AN OBSCURE PURITAN COLONY.

THERE is, I believe, in the fen district, a place called Graveley on the map ; but that is not the Graveley of which I am now about to speak as having sheltered for many years an obscure Puritan-Arian colony which sent off, to London and elsewhere, branches that had sap in them, and that took root, and grew, and flourished, and sheltered in their turn a good deal that was worthy of protection, and is not unknown to the religious thought and life of modern times.

There were two Graveleys, Graveley Magna and Graveley Parva. If I might so far forget the dignity of history as to parody the immortal observation of the negro about the two dogs, Cæsar and Pompey, I should observe that Great Graveley and Little Graveley were very much alike, especially Little Graveley. They are separately named in the county

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map which is hung up in the parlour of "The Ring of Bells," at the market town; but a drive through the district would not disclose to a hasty observer the individualities of the two places. He would merely receive general impressions of arable land, pasture land, clouds of plovers, flights of rooks, clumps of trees on hill-tops, squat gray churches, looking as if it would be impossible to stand upright in them, large houses of anomalous outline, turning up at corners of lanes quite unexpectedly, and wind-mills enough to amuse a regiment of Quixotes. To these items might be added a few straggling columns of smoke, one or two cottages, an old woman with spectacles, and a shock-headed child at a gate, with mottled and straddling legs. I ought not to forget the dikes, in which people were now and then drowned; the frequent willows, and the scarcely less frequent elder-trees, out of whose scooped branches I had large popguns made, with which I used to go out to hunt badgers and field-mice.

At Graveley Magna was the parish or district church; and also the Great Meeting: at Graveley Parva the Little Meeting. At the Great Meeting they were orthodox Trinitarian dissenters, but scarcely Puritans, in the strong sense. At the Little Meeting

they were Puritans indeed. It would be impossible to exaggerate the strictness of their religious regimen, or the extent to which their lives were *gripped*, tightened, and hardened by dogma. Very juvenile, indeed, are my recollections of these Graveleyans; but I feel quite justified in saying that nowhere have I been witness of a religious life so intense and so extrusive as that which was quietly taken for granted among these good people. They knew nothing of a diffusive philanthropy, and were very clannish. The social life of the little community was, doubtless, much concentrated, as well as confined, by the fact that its creed was so very exceptional. Briefly, the Little Meetings at Graveley were "high" Calvinistic Arians.

Party feeling, as it is called, ran high in Graveley, especially in Little Graveley. I say as it is called, because there was a time when what now takes that name would have been called everywhere, as it still is in some places, by the name of conscience. Dissenters thought of the Establishment with literal horror, and spoke of it as the Scarlet Woman, the abomination of desolation, the destroyer of souls. They had some excuse for disliking it as it was presented to their own notice by the clergyman of the place, an old man, who preached a clumsy

mixture of Blair and Paley, and one of the most horribly grotesque sinners I ever heard of. He used to “spud” thistles on the way to and from his church on Sundays. He lived on snared game and water-gruel, and never gave a penny to the poor, though he was reputed to be very rich, and to have large estates somewhere or other. His housekeeper,—a fat, good-tempered widow of fifty, dropped down into that corner nobody knew how,—was as much afraid of him as it was in her nature to be afraid of anything. He used to lock himself in, and mutter and talk, for hours, in the darkest and coldest nights, without candle or fire ; and, by way of anticipating deprecation or interference, would say, now and then,—“ You mustn’t take any notice, ma’am, if you hear a noise, any time, do you hear? because it’s only me and the Old ’Un having a tussle, do you hear?”—to which she would reply, adjusting the sandy wig which she wore with cheerful unconsciousness,—

“ I don’t know anything about Old ’Uns, sir, and wouldn’t have ’em at a gift.” Then, as her master withdrew, she would begin her one song,—

“ There was an old couple, and *they* was poor,

Fa la, fa la, fa la, fa lay !

They lived in a house, and it *had* but one door,

Fa la——”

which would probably be interrupted by the reverend gentleman,—

“Won’t you hold your tongue, ma’am? That’s one of your Meeting hymns, I know! But you shan’t blaspheme Church and King under my roof, d—dash it! I’ll set the Old ’Un on to you, ma’am!” This wretched old clerical madman left orders in his will that he should be buried upright in his coffin, in order that when the Old ’Un came for him he might be all the readier to run away! He was one morning found dead and mutilated in the mash-tub, and was buried upright, as he had requested. The murderer was never discovered.

At the Little Meeting, the minister was, you will guess, a rather crude sort of person. He was a very energetic, active man, wiry in frame; bred a shoemaker, self-taught; his heart amply supplied with the milk of human kindness, and his creed blazing with damnation. Good old creature! I once sent him a sermon of Chalmers, headed “God’s Love to all men,” and he returned it with an indignant note, in which the doctrine of “reprobation” was not in anywise minced or blinked at. He was a literary man in his way, for he had edited a hymn-book, and had included what he termed “A FEW ORIGINALS.”

One couplet of one hymn, supposed to be in praise of the Divine perfections, I remember—

“For there’s no star but what he made,
Nor herb, nor stone, nor tree, nor blade.” *

The asterisk was important, because it led you to a footnote :—

* “Of grass.”

He would go up into the pulpit and preach a fluent sermon, in which “Jehovah’s *shalls* and *wills*,” and the everlasting doom, were so perpetually appearing and reappearing, that a superficial listener might have thought his heart only a cast-iron muscle for pumping up blood into a one-idead brain; and the very next morning, when a poor brother went to him for help, he would say, with tears on his furrowed old cheeks, “Brother, I would if I could; but I lent my watch and seal on Saturday to Brother Watkins, who wanted to raise a sovereign.”

The little Meeting-house at Graveley was a very primitive place, indeed, floored with red brick. A deacon led the singing, with Rippon and Walker (two old-fashioned tune-books then in use among Dissenters) before him, and wielded, as a symbol of office, a hideous instrument called a pitch-pipe; which

had this inconvenience, that if the hand slipped a little, the projectible portion of the pitch-pipe ran hastily out, producing, occasionally, that dismal and absurd caterwauling which is the result of staggering quickly down the whole scale, chromatics and all.

The chapel had a little octagonal white pulpit supported on one pillar, and surmounted by a little octagonal sounding-board, which was of no particular use, I believe, but had, somehow, an orthodox look about it. Underneath the pulpit was the table-pew, with a raised desk at the head for the singing-deacon. Behind the desk, the deacon used to roll his eyes and wag his head most abominably, when under the inspiration of such tunes as "Hampshire," "Calcutta," "Wiltshire," "Furman," "Nativity," and "Bolton." This was bad enough; but far worse to a devout visitor, who had taste as well as devoutness, was the whispering chatter that used to go on between him and his little choir of singers in the table-pew a few minutes before service. These whispers related to the choice of the hymns to be sung, and the choice appeared, to my mind, to be made with reference to the tune. One young man would whisper, "Come, let us join;" another, "Come, ye that love;" another, "Begone, unbelief;" another, "I'm not ashamed," though for

that matter the whole lot of them ought to have been.

In musical matters, there was a fierce competition carried on between the three choirs at the three places of worship. At the Church and at the Great Meeting there were instruments,—*no* instruments at the Little Meeting. A reason of Puritan severity was alleged for this; but I suspect the real reason was, that in so small a chapel there was no room for anything larger than a pitchpipe. Attempts had been made to introduce a fiddle and a flute, on the plea that God was, according to the Psalms, to be praised with harp and psaltery; but “that was under the Old Dispensation:” a conclusive argument in Graveley. Still, on the occasion of a certain wedding—the wedding of a bright, beautiful, brown-eyed woman, whom I never saw, though some of her blood is in my veins, and manuscripts of hers in my possession,—a wedding which excited general enthusiasm in Graveley, *because* the bride was so handsome and so admired; the band of the church made a desperate attempt to storm the prejudices of the Little Meeting, and play an anthem within its walls. If they had done so, it is my belief that the audience would have had to stand outside the chapel to hear the music.

“Maimed rites” were all that, as a general rule, waited upon the weddings of Dissenters in Graveley; those malcontents only came to church under protest, and the wicked old parson gave them as little as he could in return for their money. “Cut it short, Sam,” he would say to the clerk, when heretics presented themselves at the altar; and the band never thought of offering their services in honour of such occasions, any more than the bellringers. But such was the power of beauty, intelligence, and social repute in this particular case, that the band—I record the fact in honour both of a lovely, gifted girl and of human nature—determined for once to pocket the imputation of being retainers of the Scarlet Woman, and give the lady an anthem. Their list not being large, they had selected their best—the one which gave the fullest scope for hearty and diversified instrumentation, though the burden of it was not particularly appropriate. There was once a Graveleyan who gave out, by way of epithalamium, after a profuse wedding dinner on a fierce July day, the hymn beginning

“Come on, my partners in distress!”

but the words chiefly distinguishable, amid the noise of psaltery, sackbut, shawm, dulcimer, and bass-viol,

when the Graveley band performed (which they often did) the anthem in question, were "God is gone up with a merry, merry noise, and the sound of the trump, trump, trump!" The only wind instrument in the band being a clarionet, the whole weight of the responsibility of giving effect to the iteration of the trumpet-note lay with the bass-viol, who suffered acutely when the cassocked ruffian who was to perform the wedding service forbade the anthem, on the ground that musical pearls were not to be cast before nonconforming swine:—

"The Old 'Un will come to be married and expect an anthem one of these days, I suppose! They've got a pitch-pipe at the Meeting; let 'em have an anthem on that, and be thankful they can get married at all! D-d-dang it, sir, do you call yourself a Christian? Lock up your cat-gut, and think of your duty to your king and your Gawd, as I do!"

Thus baffled, the bass-viol and his brethren went to the minister of the Little Meeting, and proposed to perform this stirring piece of music in the gallery of the Meeting on the following Sunday, in honour of the wedding. How the minister met this generous offer may be inferred from what has gone before. Pathetically puzzled that so much good music should go a

begging—the bass-viol at last concluded a negotiation with the deacons of the Large Meeting at Great Graveley, where they were “not so strict,” and where it was positively asserted that they had admitted to church-fellowship a man who exposed in his little bookcase a copy of “Clarissa Harlowe,” side by side with John Bunyan’s “Grace Abounding,” and not far from Brooks’s “Casket of Precious Ointment,” and Susannah Harrison’s “Songs in the Night.” In virtue of the negotiation referred to, “God is gone up” was to be sung and played at the Large Meeting the next Sunday, for the glory of the marriage of the week; and if any good came of it to the quarterly collection for chapel expenses, (which, as it happened, was to take place on that day,) why the quarterly collection would be so much the better off, and the band no worse.

It is difficult for me to make vividly clear to myself what manner of place Graveley was on the whole, and how the world went on there;—so remote—so foreign, so alien from all that belongs to railroads and cheap newspapers, does the current of its affairs appear; so steeped in ignorance and stupidity, and so begrimed with what is sordid and mean. Nothing but the most careful questioning of my child recollections of the

traditions of the place, added to a scrutiny of manuscripts almost illegible from age, has put it in my power at all to piece together the fragments of fact which I now endeavour to connect. The stupidity and ignorance to which I have referred are absolutely unrepresentable to the modern mind. I remember having, when a little boy, found my way into a garret in a house in Graveley, which was attractive to me for two reasons: one, that it was a storehouse for apples (which, when the door was fastened, I used to extract by means of a stick with a nail standing out laterally at the top); and the other, that it contained a very old trunk full of the strangest odds and ends. From that trunk I one day drew out an ancient pair of breeches, a yellow piece of wax candle, which had been used at the funeral of some royal personage long ago dead; a receipt for a cough, written on the back of a view of Colchester Castle; and a fragment of manuscript consisting of these words, written in very faded ink:—

“ Three times, all in the dead of night,
A bell was heard to ring;
And, at her window shrieking thrice,
The raven flapped his wing!

“ *I hear a voice you cannot hear,
Which says I must not stay;
I see a hand you cannot see,
Which beckons me away!*”

I was given to understand, by the venerable Graveleyan lady, to whom I produced my treasure, that these lines (whose author was, I need not say, Mr Tickell) were the composition of the wicked old clergyman, and had been written by him on the night of the murder; a sort of last speech and confession,—conceived in verse as was proper from a scholar such as a clergyman was presumed to be. In the middle of an account of the shocking end of the wicked old parson, my old-lady friend—who was a fair representative of the intelligence of Graveley even so recently as that—went off into a discourse on the laws of England concerning burglars and burglary; and told me, with great solemnity, that if a man broke into my house at night, I should be guilty of murder, and be hanged for it, if I shot him without first asking his name three distinct times. When I inquired if a certain legal gentleman, who had been suspected, was convicted of the murder of the clergyman, she informed me—not concealing her own belief that he *had* committed it—that he, being “a young counsellor,” had got off through an *Alibi*. This article I used for a long time to spell the name of in my own mind with a capital letter; thinking it was something fetish, and classifying it with Genie or Obi, (suggestive of “Three-

fingered Jack," whoever he was.) But, incredible as it may appear, the average Graveleyan intellect, that of my old friend into the bargain, did not get beyond thinking an Alibi was only a legal quibble—a point of form relating in some way to time and place ; but perfectly well known by judge, jury, and all the world to be a quibble, and in no way a matter of fact and justice. For years, I never used to go to bed at night without reciting three times, in a deliberate voice, "What's your name?" in case of my being suddenly called upon to shoot a burglar.

After this hint of the average level of Graveleyan intelligence, it will not be necessary to analyse the Graveleyan code of ethics. It was, substantially, about the same as that of any score of men and women whom you may meet in the next thoroughfare ; that is to say, it was entirely made by the law and custom of the country in which those people's lot had been cast. If a man had gone down among them to preach up a new code of any kind, he would have fared uncomfortably, perhaps. But the people themselves could be conceived as taking quite as kindly to one code as another, supposing them brought up in it. In other words, their reasons, if any, were *ex post facto* ones, like those of the majority of people

everywhere. Anything illegal or out-of-the-way was infamous, *because* it was illegal and out-of-the-way ; and no more questions were asked. In justice to Graveley, it must be admitted that this tone of mind was not peculiar to that remote and uncultivated district. I have read that when it was proposed to abolish Fleet marriages, Charles James Fox and others denounced the proposal in Parliament, as threatening the ruin of national morality.

That the government of a country might be wrong, and that conscience had rights as against power, was, nevertheless, an idea which found a partial, but sturdy, representative in Graveleyan Dissent,—of which something has already been said. The religious life of the Church at the Little Meeting had neither height nor breadth, nor much beauty of method ; but it was very strong, and under its shelter a good many crotchets of opinion found time to grow. In so very limited a society, intolerance would have been solitude ; so, however intolerant the Little Meeting people were towards the Church people, and, in a lesser degree, towards the Great Meeting people, they were forced to be liberal in their constructions within their own borders. Whether a person could, except “so as by fire,” be saved in the Church of England, or with an “Arminian” faith,

such as was said to be preached at the Great Meeting, was perhaps doubtful; at least it was doubtful in the minds of the narrower of the Little Meetings. But a religious body whose own peculiar creed shut them out of communion with other churches,—for no Arian would be admitted to a Trinitarian Table,—could not escape having lessons of practical charity forced upon them now and then.

Besides this, the necessities of daily life laid as heavy a hand upon these people as upon the rest of us. They, like others, found facts too strong for their intentions. What confusion of conscience, if any, was caused by it, I do not, of course, know; but these Christians, in the course of their business as farmers, millers, and what not, were constantly forced into the society of “worldlings.” It is not to be doubted that the strictest member of the Little Meeting Church sometimes took a “social glass,” on market-day, with many a man of whom the largest charity could not affirm that he was a “changed character;” nay, with many a man who could not even be dismissed as simply an “undecided character.” One thing, I am quite sure, took place in Graveley, as it does elsewhere,—namely, that when anything was to be *got* out of a man, it was found possible to be silent. If you

pressed a Graveleyan rather hard about his social glass with a very indifferent character, who was nevertheless a good customer, he would shake his head, assume an air of solemnest wisdom, and say, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Then he would shake his pipe a little more decisively, and repel any further attempt to draw him out by answering you in monosyllables of the *hum* and *ha* kind that meant nothing, but might, if you liked, pass for suggestions of the deepest wisdom. If silence is golden, Graveley was very rich in the precious metal; for there never was a community in which a stolid reserve was more highly esteemed and generally practised. All the intelligence in the world would only get you a character for being "clever and light," with the dreadful qualification of "no depth, no solidity." The Graveleyan oracles were all broad in beam, and evasively slow of speech. They carried off the prizes in conversation,—by not conversing. All they had to do was to "apply" a text of Scripture to the topic in hand, and their fame was secure. I know of a Graveleyan wit who maintained his intellectual repute to the very last day of his life, upon no better basis than that one time, when a young man had been preaching at the Little Meeting, the wit said, after a cautious silence of an hour or two, "Let

him tarry at Jericho till his beard is grown." Such a masterstroke as this was enough to make any man's fortune as a sage in Graveley. There is no measure whatever for the "depth" and the "solidity" with which the speaker would be credited.

The sharpness with which the Graveleyan mind drew the line between the "worldling" and the "decided character," is hardly to be represented to the general reader at all. The distinction, such as it was, turned less upon points of conduct than the average mind will understand to be possible; but I pause to request that these good people may not be slandered. It is true the folks at the Great Meeting accused them of Antinomianism; but I boldly affirm that I never in my life encountered a real Antinomian. The Little Meeting believed in Final Perseverance. Whom God loves, He loves to the end, and will bring to His everlasting glory in spite of his sins. Now, that this doctrine ever encouraged any human being in sinning, I do not believe. I believe the direct contrary; and so did my friends at the Little Meeting. Hence, though they "withdrew" from "backsliders,"—that is, refused to admit them to the Table until they manifested sincere repentance,—you never, in Graveley, heard a man excluded from the "covenant" for single, or even re-

peated, acts of wrong-doing. Continuous wrong-doing, unaccompanied by contrition, would, indeed, have been held to exclude a man from having even had any "part or lot" in the "covenant," and for obvious reasons; but the usual tests of fitness for church-fellowship were not moral.

This was perfectly consistent. "No human virtue, however beautiful, can be accepted of God as a passport to His kingdom. All amiable and excellent qualities may be present in a character, and yet the heart be unrenewed; while, on the other hand, there may be much that is wrong, and yet the soul may have passed from death unto life by faith." Nothing can be clearer or more logical than this. So the Little Meeting folks judged of a man's spiritual condition by what he had to tell of "the Lord's dealings with him," and had a very poor opinion of people who had no particular "experience" to relate.

There were two little tests by which a Graveleyan always felt safe in holding fast. If a man said, "Our Saviour," he was decidedly unregenerate,—a Churchman, and not even an enlightened or converted Churchman. "He must be a worldling," reasoned these people; "for Christ is *not* everybody's Saviour, and yet he says *our*." The phrase, "Our Saviour," is not, in fact, in

use among Christians of the "Evangelical" schools anywhere in England at this present time; and its adoption by any one may be taken as a tolerably certain sign that he belongs to the Cavalier or Fetichist side. Unitarians almost always say "Jesus," without the "Christ." Independents commonly speak of "*the* Saviour." Other forms are, besides, in current use,—for example, "our Lord." The extreme left of Free-Churchism usually say, "the Master."

There was one other symptom which would have led a Graveleyan of the Little Meeting to diagnose religious "indecision" wherever he found it—namely, the use of the word *love* in any but a spiritual or theologic sense. It was a "romantic" word, and smacked of novels, and plays, and ball-rooms. I cannot express the real, downright affliction which, while yet very young, I suffered from what I saw, heard, or guessed of love-matters among the Graveleyans — speaking here of Graveleyans transplanted to places like London, as well as of natives dwelling on the spot. All that did then, and does now, to my mind, constitute the very grace, and glory, and crown of life, was steadily, though tacitly, ignored by the Graveleyan mind. I do not think I ever did hear the word *love* used in any but a theo-

logical sense by a Graveleyan, man, woman, or child; and I distinctly assert that it took me years to overcome a repugnance to its adoption, or rather a timid flinching from it, which was traceable to early impressions of Graveleyan discipline. In all this, again, the Graveleyans were quite logical, so far as intention carried them; of course, nature *baulked* their intentions, and serve them right. But they were, after all, simply consistent in carrying out a conception which, as I gather from what I see and hear in the world around me, is almost universally accepted and acted upon in the most momentous of human affairs. The devout Graveleyan mind looked upon the type married pair as two friends who had to keep house together, do just as other people did, have their friends to see them, flog the children with whatever severity might be necessary, and avoid, with particular care, anything like bankruptcy, or disreputable associations. The essence of the conjugal relation was, I always supposed, a degrading accident in their eyes. Many and many a time have I looked on with an imaginative child's disgust at a Graveleyan feeding-time; but I could never have made these pious people understand my contempt for the frowsy brutalities they called "friendly intercourse," or for their solemn paradise

of pork and cabbage. What their "love" was, I never did venture to figure to myself. But I know, by easy inference, what love must be, if you give it an ill name, and shove it away into a drain-pipe. To this day I am unable to speak upon the subject with many devout people. "The butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker,"—the first man you meet in the street,—the highly respectable gentleman over the way,—these are all bad enough; but if you put into their mouths a special phraseology, they become ten thousand times more repulsive. Incredible as it may appear, I did once actually "tackle" a Graveleyan matron upon the question. I asked her, point-blank, how the minister came to marry, and whether his wife could help hating him! Of course, I was very young. I got my answer—something contemptuous, which I did not *then* understand, and cannot now repeat. But I felt at the time that it was a *shameful* thing; and, for many years, could not think of it without an indignant blush. Lest this should convey a false impression, I will add, that it was no more than I have heard a great many times since, and no more than the enormous majority of people would sanction,—with a little improvement upon the phrases employed. The Graveleyan matron who said it was also a very

good woman, measured by any of the current standards.

Of course, nature was, as I have said, too strong for the Graveleyans; and something of grace and sweetness, something of the *lumen purpureum juventæ* used to slide into their love-matters against their will. It was, however, a perfectly understood thing that all this was "filagree," "fancy," "nonsense," "romantic stuff," and eminently opposed to a "spiritual" frame of mind. It might be winked at, as toys for children, or jam to carry the jalap of life; but it had no "solidity." On no act of dishonesty or cruelty have I ever heard such vials of Graveleyan wrath poured out as on the poetic aspect of attachment between men and women. My excellent respectable neighbour spares his wrath, but habitually treats it as an "illusion," which is nature's trap for her own ends. But why nature should *have* any ends, or whether, without Faith, Love, and Heroism, any ends are worth while, is a question which was not presupposed in Graveleyans. They played out the sordid game of life, like munching kine, and passed it on to new generations without wondering at all about it. They were not without self-consciousness, for they regarded this "vile world" as only a muddy sort of path to another; but then there was nothing to pre-

vent a *regulated* wallowing in the mud. Life had no recognised beauties or sanctities in those old times among those old-fashioned people. Soon after a Graveleyan matron became aware that she was to give a new human creature to the world, it was sanitary etiquette to be "let blood,"—so that all the world knew betimes; and a young wife had a mob of old dowds plaguing her with their accoucherries before she had fairly adjusted her mind to the situation.

It has been said that religion may be defined as "reverence for *the lower*." At least, some degree of such reverence is a *sine quâ non* of religious feeling. But though I cannot remember the time when I had not begun to pray, I cannot, alas! remember the time when I had not begun to find it difficult to respect the majority of the people I had to come in contact with.

Of course, all the severity with which regulative conceptions were applied in Graveley could not prevent love and marriage becoming, at times, as they are everywhere, troublesome subjects. Perhaps, for example, a beautiful and clever woman, like the ancestress of mine whom I have already referred to, would fall in love, or go near to falling in love, with an "undecided character,"—an excellent person, may be,

but with no personal "experience" to relate; a man whose conversation the deacons would not find edifying. Many people would scarcely understand all this. But the fact is that any "church" like the one of which we are now speaking, would excommunicate a girl for marrying a man in whom the pastor and deacons could not recognise the "saving change," without which the most spotless and careful liver is with them only a candidate for civility, common kindness, and business intercourse. Such a marriage would, in Graveley, have been nothing less than downright "backsliding." The wife's name would have been "struck off the church books;" she would have been told that (the final perseverance of the saints barring her utter destruction) she would be "saved only so as by fire;" her friends would all have dropped off; she would have been "a stumbling-block" (or would have been called one) to the congregation; her mother would have been bewildered; her father's gray hairs would have gone down to the grave with sorrow!

Nor can it be omitted that marriage was in other respects a very difficult topic in Graveley. The Church of England was, I have already said, an abomination to Graveleyan Dissent at the Little Meeting. It was Babylon, the Scarlet Woman, the Destroyer of Souls.

It was Trinitarian. It had open communion. It sprinkled, instead of dipping. It said, "Our Saviour." It permitted "unconverted" people to preach. All this they hated. Of course, then, they hated the social compulsion which drove them into going to church to be married. Rather than have their children christened there, they preferred to run all risks; and "Dr Williams's Library" in Redcross Street, Cripplegate, London, (an institution which no longer exists, I suppose, now that the altered law of registration meets the purpose for which it was set up,) was the place at which the births of little nonconforming Christians were recorded for legal purposes. But there were not wanting Dissenters of stuff sufficiently stern to ask, in addition, a question which Milton would not have hesitated about for a moment:—"Why should Dissenting Christians get married at church, if they must stifle their religious convictions in order to do so? Let them remain single until the force of opinion compels a change of the law; or let them do as other sects have done—have their own marriage rites, dispense with the law, and stand by each other in the name of God."

All this was very painful; and one of the suggestions made for softening down the difficulties of the

case was, that the functions of "Dr Williams's Library" should be extended ; that Dissenters should contract marriages in their own way at their own places of worship, and register them in Redcross Street, just as they did the births of their children. Of course, the women shrank from this on account of the little ones ; and so the proposal never came to anything.

I was, myself, probably, registered at Dr Williams's Library, but if so, it did not make a Graveleyan of me. I was always considered much too "light." That I was so fond of poetry was rather a bad sign, *coupled* with the lightness ; though poetry was cultivated in Graveley. Far worse, however, was a tendency which I somehow betrayed, to read and recite dramatic dialogue.

Seriousness was *de rigueur* in Graveley, even on week-days. I used to be told by Graveleyans that Jesus Christ, when on earth, was seen to weep, but never to smile,—of which I was accustomed, ineffectually, to challenge the proof. In my habit of repeating hymns, in a half whisper to myself, I was constantly checked. Children, in Graveley, be it noted, were discouraged both from singing hymns and saying prayers. If, when they arrived at years of discretion, they sang hymns or used the language of de-

votion in any other way, the responsibility rested with *them*, but nobody was allowed, without rebuke, to use the language of devotion in Graveley, unless he had been accredited as a "changed character." In Graveley, too, you were liable to be challenged in the midst of some innocent unconscious enjoyment, with the question, "Could you ask the blessing of the Lord upon this?" or, "Would you wish the Lord to appear in the clouds, and surprise you doing this?" (for besides being Arians, these people were Millenarians.) I have seen this in cases where I myself should have confounded the questioner by simply replying, "Yes, I should;" or adding, (if anything,) "my Lord would justly be wroth with me if He found me *thinking* at all upon such an occasion."

I have already said that conversation was seldom brisk in Graveley, and that the almost universal pipe of tobacco went a long way towards making up social bliss. Let me try and sketch a scene of which I was a witness when very, very young indeed. The room is full of fat farmer uncles, and very prim aunts. The fat uncles are solemnly smoking. The aunts sitting erect on their chairs, ruminating like so many old cows. Two or three children present are pretty miser-

able, and suffering agonies of bashfulness. Such talk as there is is theological.

Uncle John. Yes; we know the Word—"I will never leave thee,"—(*puff, puff, puff.*)

Uncle Benjamin. "Nor forsake thee,"—(*puff, puff, puff.*)

Aunt Frances. "Though painful at present,"

Aunt Hannah. "'Twill cease before long."

A dead silence now ensues. The children, or some of them, have, by the contagion of sympathy, caught up the real, ultimate pathos of all this. They quite understand that reference to what is "painful at present;" they know it means temptations; and having heard so much about the necessity of deep convictions of sin before any soul can go to Christ for salvation, they have a vague but deeply distressing suspicion that they have never yet felt wicked enough. One of them will add to his prayer that night a petition that he may be made more sensible of his guilt and wretchedness. However, after a good solid block of silence has been interposed, some secular topic arises in this "conversation."

John. Kezia!—(*puff, puff*)—that boy's hair is very long.

Frances. I wonder, sister, you don't have it cut.
(*A pause.*)

Hannah. It is bad for the constitution. (*A pause.*)

Benjamin. He'll soon lose it, I dare say,—(*puff, puff, puff.*)

John. They always do,—people that have much head-knowledge.

Little Boy, (shaking his mane.) Head-knowledge !
Why, what other knowledge can there be ?

This sally is followed by so grim and rebuking a silence, that the little boy whose hair is too long quickly manages to glide out of the room, burning with shame all over. Just as he has closed the door, he hears himself pleasantly criticised by his uncles and aunts.

Hannah. If you don't look sharp, sister Kezia, you'll find that boy too much for you.

John. Perhaps he'll grow out of it in time,—
(*puff, puff, puff.*)

And then a solemn silence again. I once heard of a couple of brothers in the Fen district, who, though living under the same roof, had not exchanged a word for fourteen years. Communication was unavoidable, but it was managed indirectly—they talked *at* each

other. What Tom wanted said to Harry, or Harry to Tom, was passed through a colloquial catspaw, and the answer would arrive, "per procuration," in the same way. When Tom, who was a racketty blade, had stayed out a little later than usual, Harry would get fidgetty and restless, potter about the room, snuff the candles, poke the fire, look at the clock, and talk to the wall. "There, bless my soul! Tom isn't back yet, and it's just twelve! I never knew him so late as that; yes, I did once though, about ten years ago. Hm!—where *can* Tom be? Hm!—well, we'll wait till half-past, and then, if he isn't back, Jack must go after him. There he is—no! Hm!—where *can* Tom be?" . . . Enter Tom, rather bright in the eye, and rather "lax in his gait." Silence. Harry subsides into his corner, and looks dead into the fire, with his hands on his knees. Amicable, but unspeakable, snooze, till the last ember dies out, and it is time to go to bed.

Sometimes this habit of indirect talk led to droll consequences. Tom had a pet dog; and one night, while a new, and not superfluously intelligent, house-boy was laying the tablecloth for supper, Tom played with the dog's ears as it lay in his lap, and delivered himself of a monologue like this:—"Yes—yes—yes; Spot's a bad dog—a very bad dog; Spot must

be hanged to-morrow morning before breakfast. Joe must hang Spot—to-morrow morning—with the rope double—before breakfast. Yes—hang Spot. Bad dog. Hang him—before breakfast. Yes. Hm!” The next morning, at breakfast, Spot’s master misses him. “Whew! whew! Spot! Spot!” No Spot answers to the familiar summons. “Joe,” says Tom, “where’s Spot?” “Spot, sir?” says Joe, looking down his nose, and shaking all over; “Spot, sir? You said he was to be hung, sir—before breakfast, sir; and so I hung him, sir, with the rope double, sir!”

I cannot say that this pair were true Graveleyans, for they used to play at cards; and one time had a corpse, in its coffin, hauled up on to the communion-table to take dummy at whist, (an escapade for which they were forced to make themselves scarce;) but their habitual incommunicativeness was scarcely an exaggeration of the sort of thing which would obtain you a character for “solidity” in Graveley.

Yet, in this little community, there was something like intellectual life. The people at the Little Meeting, being Calvinistic Arians, must be presumed to have thought a little; for their creed was, I need not repeat, in the highest degree exceptional. Being kept contro-

versially on the defensive, their wits were sharpened by frequent conflict, and a good deal of theological squibbing, in which Trinitarians were charged with worshipping a false god, (with a small g, which made the satire,) went on in Graveley. Besides this, however, under the shadow of religious principle, and in warm nooks where, in spite of "church order," the affections insisted upon taking on rainbow colours, it appears that seeds of thought and imagination sometimes took root and grew. I believe Chillingworth is one of the classics of the Graveleyan creed. I am sure Milton is, and his name was cherished and his writings read in Graveley. Other books, recognised as readable by "decided" characters, were Young's "Night Thoughts," Dr Dodds's "Prison Thoughts," and Susannah Harrison's "Songs in the Night." The Graveleyan beauty whom I have mentioned, and who was received into the "best society," Church as well as Dissent, for many miles around, on the strength of her handsome face and radiant wit, must have known of other books, and no doubt read them; and she appears to have set the literary fashions in Graveley. In some of the circles to which she was admitted, I have no doubt *vers de société* were a common amusement; and certainly versifica-

tion was cheap in Graveley. "Lines" on this, and "Lines" on that, were common enough among Graveleyans.

It is a remarkable instance of good taste on the part of these sweet singers of Graveley that, unlike the reckless Hiram Adolphus Hawkins, who spoke blank verse in the bosom of his family, they usually abstained from blank verse, and clung to rhyme. Whenever anything so difficult as unrhymed verse was attempted, the "piece"—"piece" was Graveleyan for poem—was solemnly headed with the words, "*Wrote in Blank Verse.*" This was either to call the attention of the reader to the audacity of the flight, or else to save him from disappointment when he should get a few lines ahead, and discover that there was no jingle. If the composition was esteemed successful, the poet became forthwith a marked man or woman, and was liable to be appealed to for a decision the next time any question arose on a point of grammar, or the distances of the heavenly bodies from each other. I believe Graveleyans considered poetry, grammar, and astronomy covered the whole circle of human attainments. But the felicitous individual who had produced a poem had to succumb to the laws of compensation like ordinary mortals; for what he gained in

literary dignity, he invariably lost in practical *prestige*, and, if a farmer, was considered to be on the road to ruin in an agrarian point of view. Everything he did on his farm was dubious; and he could not look thoughtful in company without causing titters among the girls, (girls *did* titter in Graveley, though tittering was thought much more unworthy of immortal creatures than a surfeit of bacon and greens,) and setting afloat whispers of “moon-raking” and “star-gazing” among the practical and “solid” people. If the blank-versifier and culprit was a lady, her cheeses were subjected to the most trenchant criticism allowed by the Graveleyan code of etiquette, and the heels of her own and her children’s stockings, (supposing she had children,) were inspected with much vigilance by visiting matrons. I do not know if I should be right in trying to account for the superlative estimation in which blank verse was held in Graveley, by supposing that the Graveleyans had made the discovery which others, both more and less cultivated, have often made besides—namely, that though to a neophyte the trick of rhyming appears something very profound and mysterious indeed, the jingle of his bells really stimulates Pegasus to new paces—that the sound so frequently helps the sense, as to compensate you for the trouble

you may now and then have in finding an amiably-disposed mate for a word like parallelopipedon ; that, consequently, there is presumably more of the pure afflatus where there is no rhyme, supposing the work to be creditably turned out. I should rather be inclined to think that our friends *had* some perception of the arduousness of writing in blank verse ; but that their veneration for the art rested mainly upon the fact that the unrhymed heroic measure had been adopted by those great poets, Milton, Young, and Dr Dodd.

But I cannot help fancying that in Graveley Magna, the circle of poetic acquirement must have been wider, for I have a faint recollection of once hearing a girl in her teens trotted out by a London visitor in this way :—

“I should think you would like poetry, Miss So-and-so? Have you read much?”

“I have read the ‘Farmer’s Boy,’ sir.”

“And there is some poetry in the ‘Pleasing Instructor,’ my dear,” interposes the young lady’s mamma.

“O yes, ma!—I forgot, ‘Colin and Lucy’ by Mr Tickell, and ‘Hymn to Adversity’ by Mr Gray, and ‘Vital Spark,’ and ‘Father of all,’ and ‘The Spacious Firmament,’ and ‘The Curfew Tolls.’”

I think I have just heard of a real Graveleyan who once quoted Shakespeare ; but I regard the anecdote as apocryphal, more especially as I know the popular horror of anything dramatic was so excessive that the act of Milton having written “Comus” and “Samson Agonistes” was often mentioned to his discredit ; and only the enormous prestige of his name, and, perhaps, the fact that he had been an Arian, “carried off” (as painters say) the terrible stain of his having written dialogue in *verse*. As for dialogue in prose,—why, you might dramatise John Bunyan for that matter, and then—why, were you ?

There was one person in Graveley, who was of no religious party whatever,—the elderly widow who kept house for the wicked old clergyman, and she had probably a natural tendency to what Graveley so much abhorred ; for when, a year or two afterwards upon her coming to town in the track of an emigrant branch of the Puritan colony, I renewed my acquaintance with her, she encouraged me in all manner of un-Graveleyan hankerings, and actually lent me “Gulliver’s Travels” and “Richard III.” I used to steal to her house and read them by snatches,—feeling, I grieve to say, very guilty, but not being able to deny myself the indulgence. My own childish taste

for recitation she used to foster at every opportunity. She was possessed of a copy of "Enfield's Speaker," and would endeavour to make me recite Gray's Bard, or take Brutus to her Cassius in the quarrel scene. I would begin with, as I thought, sufficient emphasis,

"Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!
Confu——"

when my instructress would spring from her chair, assume an attitude, and cry,—

"Gracious *me*, boy! why don't you learn to gesticulate properly? Speak hout! Look here:

'Ru-u-in seize thee, ruthress King!
Confusion on thy banners waits
Though fanned by conquest's er-rimson wing,
They mock the air with hidle state!
'Elm nor 'Auberk's twisted mail,
Nor ev'n thy virtues, Tyrant!'—

(*frantically.*) There; now my false curls is down! Ho, ho, ho! you won't go and tell of a poor old body like me, will you, boy?"

Or it would be "Brutus and Cassius," starting off in this wise,—

"Now then; *you* stand there, and fold your arms across, and hold up your head, and look *very* serious

—that aint it—you must frown a little. Now! I'm going to begin—fix your heyes on me!

‘That you have wronged me doth appear in this :
You have condemned and noted Looshus Peller,
For taking bribes 'ere of the Sardriums ;
Wherein my letters, praying on his side,
Because I knew the man, were slighted off.’

Now then, ‘you wronged yourself ——.’ But, when you come to ‘Be ready, gawds!’ go like this—fix your heye on the ceilin’, stretch both your harms up as high as hever you can, and then you say—

‘Be ready, gawds, with hall your thunderbolts,
Smash me into pieces!’”

Perhaps I suggested—

“‘*Dash* me to pieces,’ aint it?”

“P'raps it is; but dash and smash means the same thing. Ah well, two heads is better than one; I see you're right, boy. I'll have my drop o' beer now, and we'll do it better next time. Ho, ho, ho!

‘There was an old couple, and they was poor—
Fa la, fa la, fa la, fa lay !
They lived in a house, an' it had but one door—
Fa la, fa la ——.’

Ho, ho, ho! Aint I a funny old woman?”

I have by me, retained as Graveleyan relics, a bundle of yellow, faded manuscript miscellanies, contributed by different pens in Graveley. Good, bad, and indifferent are they ; but nearly all in verse,—the verse being mostly of a pastoral or a theological character. There is, however, a sprinkling of recipes for dropsy, asthma, and rheumatism,—some of them copied from old Buchan, who was much venerated in Graveley ; and there are a few ladies' letters, in which the leading topics are invariably births, deaths, and marriages, and final perseverance. Among lyrics of minor poets in Graveley I find one, the production of a young mother, whose baby appears to have kept her from chapel. The poem displays all the usual characteristics of feminine writing, especially that one characteristic of boundless regard for the minister. Here you have a verse or two from an

ODE,

ON SENDING A CAKE TO A MINISTER WHO HAD BEEN A FARM
LABOURER.

“ Time long ago, you used to sow,
With seedlip by your side ;
Now for my sake accept a cake,
Nor let it wound your pride

“ To turn with me, and look and see,
 The goodness of the Lord,
 Who from the seed, in very deed,
 Called you to preach His word.

.

“ Could I partake with you the cake,
 The moments would be dear,
 As that can't be, I'll send it thee,
 And bow submissive here.”

You will not expect or require me to criticise verses like those. I have many similar compositions, all breathing pious and kindly feeling, and mostly turning upon some incident of the hour. An accident to a chimney-pot wakes up a sturdy farmer to a fierce lyric, beginning

“ Beneath this humble roof,
 My father lived of old.”

The return of a borrowed half-crown is celebrated in octosyllabics of “fatal facility :”—

“ The silver piece to you is sent,
 To banish all your discontent,”

and so on. The figures of speech are often questionable; and “truth” is sometimes forced into a hateful rhyming alliance with “earth.” But the general conclusion from my bundle of manuscript is, that Graveley would have been an Arcadia in its way, if it had not

been for two circumstances, I. That things cost money ; II. That two men cannot marry the same woman, and *vice versâ*—circumstances which (the philosophic mind will not fail to observe) enter largely into the composition of human discomfort everywhere.

Even at a later period than that to which I am now referring, these good people found themselves in popular and entertaining literature. The circulating library was a thing only remotely dreamt of in Graveley. It was believed that works of fiction were read by the servants at the Hall, and the wicked old parson at the church had been heard to mention “Tom Jones ;” but these things were spoken of as hobgoblin stories. If you were seen with a story-book in hand, you would be reminded of Joseph, and the infelicitous fruit which grew on that garden wall in the “Pilgrim’s Progress ;” and if the plague had broken out in Graveley, the consternation could scarcely have been greater than it was, when a female relative of one of our friends who had come up from London to settle there, was found to have brought with her “Thaddeus of Warsaw,” by Miss Porter, and “The Children of the Abbey,” by Regina Maria Roche !

These contraband articles were coolly produced from time to time, and read by their owner, quite as a

matter of course, and with no apparent sense of their combustibleness. Cousinly kindness at first barely tolerated them, but by and by their exterior became familiar. One day the open book was dipped into by a native, as it lay upon a garden seat. It is written in the annals of Graveley that the first trespasser was a lady. It is also written in the same annals that, having broken the ice, she began to drink more boldly. It is also recorded that a serious passage in "Thaddeus of Warsaw," artfully quoted without acknowledgment of its source, by a daring innovator, was so fortunate as to meet the approbation of one of the deacons of one of the churches, and from that hour the fortunes of fiction began to look up in Graveley. "Thaddeus of Warsaw," and "The Children of the Abbey," were read at first in snatches, and in by-places; afterwards *in extenso* and before the sun. "Thaddeus of Warsaw" always held its own and commanded most readers, which I attribute partly to its intrinsic superiority, but still more to its being "founded on fact." This, which to a critical eye means a bad book, was a strong recommendation in the eyes of the sober-minded and uncritical Graveleyans.

As for me, I have long ceased to wish to retain in my own person anything Graveleyan but independence

of thought and devout earnestness of spirit. Belonging, as a little boy, to the branch of the old Puritan colony which came to London, I received, in what I will call devout independence, a lesson which perhaps few children are so happy as to receive. I was familiar with a spectacle which, in its way, was sorrowfully great. I used to see one solitary human being, shut out by an article of belief from church-fellowship, and largely from human intercourse, since intimate association with any but pious people was impossible (because believed to be divinely forbidden) to this sad, strong, beautiful soul of which I speak: the most compassionate, the most self-denying, the most open and candid that I ever knew; the most incessant in prayer, the most faithful in service; tender as an angel, yet wholly lifted above the fear of man. It was my lot to see this saintly soul refused communion by a minister who was then a Trinitarian;—admitted to communion by the same on his becoming an Arian;—and, lastly, again refused communion by the same on his returning to Trinitarianism.

I make no comment. But thus early was I brought face to face with the question—How much difference between human beings may consist with self-respecting fellowship? Thus early was I made familiar with

the fact, that one human soul may have to defend its faith and its very life against all the world beside.

It was not likely that I should grow up with a habit of respecting opinion, or of seeking grounds of intercourse in any possible kind of convention. I grew up, on the contrary, in the habit of seeking such grounds in the "individuality of the individual," (a phrase which is not of my coinage, however,) and inviolable toleration all round.

But, before I came to discern all the reasons for cherishing such a habit, I had to learn something of life as it was exhibited outside that section of the Puritan camp in which my earliest nurture took place—outside the Puritan camp in general—and, lastly, outside of any class of my fellow-creatures among whom the culture of the religious life was at all a subject of organised association. In learning my new lessons, I had to discover that I had insensibly mixed up with Puritanism many things which were not Puritan, but which I clung to with a passionate clinging, though I found them playfully ignored in the great world out of which I had to make sense. Thus I had, as a Puritan boy, many puzzles and surprises. But I had still another lesson to learn. I had to be taught that some of the people whom my Graveley friends

would shun not only as unconverted, but as wanting in virtues the preaching up of which they would call "legal," or Arminian, were not wanting in loveable, and sometimes, heroic goodness. I even came to suspect the existence of a law of distribution of virtues.* Here, once again, catching glimpses of the profitability of unprofitable servants, I was confronted by the old question in another shape.

* See Appendix.

II.

THE PUZZLES OF A PURITAN BOY.

REQUESTING that the word "boy" may not be construed with strictness, and yet retaining it as the true one, I have resolved, because just at this moment I find my memory bright, clear, and strong, to put down, as they occur, some of the things which puzzled me when I first had to confront the world.

These things have long ago taken rank with me as commonplaces and simple matters of fact. I notice that they *are*; and there an end, except that occasionally "the agony returns;" the pain which accompanied the original discovery—a pain which often amounts to a quite sincere desire that I had never been born—a desire which I can with truth declare had nothing to do, has nothing to do, with anything but absolutely disinterested observation of life. Of course one's own troubles, if any, intensify one's *moods*; but the surprises which I now record are such as came to me before the age of trouble; and the noticeable point is,

that for years I used to think those facts were very exceptional which I now see to be very common. For years I fought against the belief in their reality ; but I had to give way at last, though I still see life *in the light* in which I met my first surprises. And I have a firm confidence, that others see life in the *same* light, and will grant me some of their sympathy if they ever see those lines.

1. One of my earliest surprises had reference to Dinner. About dinner the world makes an astonishing fuss, and constantly treats it as if it were a motive of action. I once heard a lecture, by a very intelligent and cultivated man, delivered to a large audience of respectable people. At this lecture I got my first glimpse of the difficulty now before me. "Franklin invited his opponents to dine with him," said the lecturer, "and of course they came ; for however you may dislike a man's opinions, you know very well you don't refuse his dinners." This sally was received with roars of laughter. I have a hundred times since then read or heard the like, and have come to admit that the majority of my fellow-creatures do find a joke in it. Well, all I can say is, that I don't. I am a very hearty eater, and not a bad drinker either, and I like society ; especially do I love to sit silent at a table

and see the happy faces around me, now and then putting in a word for sociability's sake. But, dinner a motive of action? Grant me patience, ye gods! I swear I would not cross the road for the best dinner that ever was served, taking the dinner *quoad* dinner. *Le vrai Amphitryon est l'amphitryon où l'on dîne.* Really, now? I am myself as indifferent as Andrew Marvell to all the Amphitryons that ever lived! Again I say I am a hearty eater, and a not ungenial drinker; but I can go without food, and forget it, and do not in the least understand all this jesting about victuals. Of course one doesn't like to be hungry; but hopelessly unintelligible to me was the speech of a Dissenting minister, now dead, who, when a benevolent scheme was proposed by some brethren in the ministry, said, "We shall never get on till we've dined over it." What I should myself propose in such a case would be to discuss the matter upon a light breakfast, with fresh morning hearts and heads, and seal the compact with a dinner when the thinking was over. However, it is of no use talking. No doubt dinner *is* divine, or so many people would not say so.

2. Another of my puzzles arose in this way. I constantly observed upon public platforms and in public discussions, that disputants took advantage of topics

which were either clap-trap in themselves, or were clap-trap "by position," as vowels become long by the same. An appeal to domestic sympathies is not in itself clap-trap, but it is clap-trap when made as it usually is made. What a cowardly thing it is to urge an argument to which you know your opponent cannot reply without travelling into matters which cannot be publicly discussed! But who has not seen and heard this cowardly thing done? I write this with a clear conscience. I think I can say that I never in my life was seduced into taking advantage of an opponent, by pressing a topic which was not open to him also. And, in reply, in public discussion I have always felt bound to be peculiarly moderate, because my opponent had no opportunity of answering me. In the same spirit, I have never taken advantage of lapses or obvious errors in statement or argument, but have felt it my duty to restate for him, if necessary, my opponent's case, quietly correct his errors, and occasionally amend his formula. I have discovered that the meanesses of which we have been speaking are all ranked under the head of something known as "persuasion." Very good. For my part I will, until death, maintain that they are in the same category with bribery, theft,

and personal violence. And thousands of people will agree with me.

3. There is an *innuendo* which is deeply imbedded in English talk and English literature, but to which I am almost ashamed to refer. It lies in the words—"It's a wise child that knows its own father." This charming little saw I heard delivered the other night in public,—guardedly, of course,—and it was greeted, as it generally is greeted, with a volley of laughter. I looked round and saw the faces of respectable people stretched wide with amusement. Now, in the course of the old O.-P. riots at Covent Garden Theatre, Kemble came one night to the front and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, may I beg leave to ask what it is you want?" Permit me to parody him and say, Ladies and gentlemen, may I beg leave to ask what it is you mean? I have not only the certainty of a quick observer, with a powerful recollection; not only the certainty of a man of the world, who has had "experience;" but the certainty of a soul that tries hard to keep a single eye; the certainty, I say, that the average woman is chaste and faithful, up to the mountain heights of the sweetest dream that ever poet had. Indeed, the tenacious affection of quite ordinary

women is not only earnest, sweet, and solemn—there is something almost terrible about it; it seems to touch upon the deepest mysteries, and bring the very heavens and earth together. That is my opinion, ladies and gentlemen, and I am *not* a milksop, and *not* a chick. On the contrary, I have seen a good deal of what is abnormal, and could possibly turn the flanks of the knowing ones with a few things they don't know. However, that is neither here nor there. But I do hereby pledge myself to a faith unshaken and unshakable in the purity and fidelity of the ordinary maid and wife, as she may be met in the streets, or seen at church or concert in this land.

4. I have a vivid remembrance of the first time of my coming into collision with a certain impression that every human being wants to shirk labour and get off to pleasure; giving as little as he possibly can in exchange for money or any other *quid pro quo* that is offered to him. This impression I presume to be founded upon general consciousness and general experience; but there is nothing in my own mind to correspond with it. Illness apart, I love work, and do not grudge effort. I do, indeed, know a state of mind in which, illness apart, labour is *unwelcome*; but then that is a quasi-pantheistic mood which does not seek

pleasure. It seeks nothing at all ; and, pushed as far as it will go, lands you in Nirwâna. But I know nothing of the thing called laziness, or the thing called "shirking." If anybody says, and, really, almost everybody seems to say, that these things are human nature, I have only to ask, *whose* human nature ?

5. I might ask the same question with regard to that almost universal characteristic, love of power. How delighted most people appear to me to be when they can order others about ; or, at least, succeed in controlling them ! My neighbour there has, I daresay, a real desire to know and do what is right ; but, alas ! he has also a desire to make other people do what he thinks is right ; a desire to which I am a total stranger. So long as other people do not meddle with my *rights*, it never occurs to me to wish to manage them, or to make them correspond with any pattern of my own fancy. They may disturb my *pleasures* for ever without, I think, shaking the firm hold which my mind retains of what is simply just. And I am, to this hour, utterly, radically, hopelessly incapable of conceiving why the average human being should be so devoured with zeal to compel others to do as he does. But since I observe this zeal to exist in a peculiarly rabid state among those who think others have a *pleasure* more

than they have, I have little difficulty in laying it, on the whole, to the account of envy,—which puts on the mask of conscience. I am, indeed, fully persuaded that if a man were found who by any unaccustomed means reared strawberries of quite exceptional beauty, the first impulse of the crowd (after failing to imitate) would be to obtain an Act of Parliament to limit the excellence of strawberries, and so put down the exceptional cultivator as immoral. The love of power very often shows itself in the masked form of that generous egotism which likes a large train of followers, and is so fond of offering “inducements.” Half the business of the world seems carried on in this spirit. Is it my fault or my folly, or what, that I cannot sympathise? It is surely possible that things and persons should present themselves fairly, and with a noble reticence that is above persuasion by inducement; and surely that is better than the mean urgencies of competition. My own desire is that my neighbour, whether for purposes of business or love, should take me for what I am, without my thrusting myself upon him. May I not do him a wrong if I urge him? Hence, I hate competition. Nay, I hate urgencies, except of pure argument. From childhood I have been haunted by the terror of being some day placed

in such a position that I might have either to perish, or to *urge* some one to help me—in which case I feel sure I should die rather than speak. Among my first and bitterest recollections are those of occasions upon which I had to suffer blame, or punishment, for faults I had not committed ; and at such times I never *could* bring myself to “urge” anything in self-defence ; for there are times when even the truth has some of the meanness of compulsion about it.

6. In this connexion, let me here proceed to mention another of my surprises—namely, the tendency which people in general have to stick to rules *which give them authority over others*, when the rules serve no useful purpose, and might just as well be destroyed or relaxed. Let me not be mistaken. Not only do I keenly feel the bonds of habit myself ; I am almost the *slave* of habit, and am even fantastically regular in my mode of life. But, then, I never feel the desire to make other people comply with my regularities ; that’s the distinction. If I had told a clerk that his hours would be from ten to six, and then discovered that he was not wanted after four, I should be only too delighted to let him go at four. There are other people like me, I find ; but not many. I suppose it is from want of sympathy that my friends do not see how wrong they are ; yet

we know in our own minds that we feel every restriction as an evil; it may be the less of two, it may be duty; but, again, it may not; and if not, why then, in Heaven's name, let the rule go! Among men of business I have found a very ludicrous superstition about rules and forms of all kinds; they call it all "business." "Business first, and pleasure afterwards," that is their motto. I have known mercantile men sacrifice domestic affection, and what I should have called plain duty, to this idol of business—which *they* call duty. "Well, well," they say in such cases, "business must be attended to, you know." What it all means I haven't the least idea. I claim to be considered a man of business myself. I am accurate, punctual, and laborious. But, after all, there are gradations in "duties of imperfect obligation;" and it certainly appears to me that in reference to duties of that class the mass of men and women are as truly mere fetichists as any poor black wretch in Dahomey or Senegambia, and *capable* of being quite as cruel. For me to give "orders" or fix "hours" that limit the freedom of another is always a matter of pain, sometimes of extreme pain. One's feeling might be this:—"It is, speaking absolutely, a misfortune to this person that I should have to limit his freedom of

action. If, as a matter of divine expediency, I am *forced* to do it, let me do it with regret, and let me recede from my position as often as I possibly can."

7. In poetic prose, and in the best poetry, I used, when a boy, to read the loftiest things about love between men and women. The loftiest thing I read fell as short of my own feelings upon the subject as it probably did of those of the illustrious writers themselves. But when I began to mix a little with the world, I had to learn that all this is, by the majority of human beings, considered "*mere poetry*," whatever that may mean. Something, at all events, that will not "last;" that has to give way to more "sober" views; that cannot be taken into account by practical people. In this "*mere poetry*," to which I pray that I may cling to my latest breath, love is an emotion which *commands* and employs joyous and tender symbols of sense. In life, in public teaching, in legislation, I find it is the sign which commands and is taken account of; while the thing signified is waved aside. It is no part of my ideal of life that laws should deal with emotions; but they can hold back from outraging them by proceeding upon a basis which is precisely that of a dog-breeder. If human

beings of the lowest and the lower types must have their happiness cared for,—as they, of course, must, and I am willing to own that “religion may be defined as reverence for the lower,”—let it be so done that the higher types are not, *by force*, made to suffer. The whole scheme of things is carried on by the vicarious sacrifice of the good to the pressure from without of the bad,—that is the law of progress;—but do let us try and make the law work as lightly as we can. In the meanwhile, I stand just where I did when a Puritan Boy, puzzled with the conflict of ideals in this matter. If other people are intimate with “appetite,” which should subordinate emotion, be it so. I wouldn’t interfere on any account with a world which is so happy and virtuous upon that basis; but, in the meanwhile, my own ideal of love is emotion subordinating appetite, just as I find it in the “mere poetry” which once, in pure simplicity of soul, I used to think people really believed in, and would really live and die by. I have since found out that this poetry of passion is deliberately treated as if it were mere paint upon an ugly face—something that will wash off; and that the “human” theory, upon which proceed legislation and custom, is not emotion subordinating appetite, but rules to compel appetite either way, whatever becomes

of emotion. I have also observed that, although the incongruity is patent and undeniable, although it cannot escape a noble mind, it is only here and there that a confession of it leaks out; the enormous majority, even of the fine natures, lending themselves to the implicit falsehood of a theory which pretends, with a wicked lie, to serve God, who is light without darkness or deceit.

8. I might go on for ever with my early puzzles; for I can recall them with but little effort. For example, I observed that the love of truth was even horribly rare, and that what most people take for it is a desire to know other people's concerns, for the purpose of controlling them. One is constantly hearing somebody or other called "deceitful," only for keeping back matters which concern nobody but the person's own self.

9. Again, I was early to discover that there is very little sense of justice in the world. Wherever there is a quarrel people seem as if they could do nothing but take sides—hold with the hare, or run with the hounds; or do both by turns. That there is in every case of human difference a hard skeleton of justice, perfectly demonstrable to honest thought, never seems to occur to them. Or they mistake the

fact that it is impossible to *realise* such an ideal, for a proof that it does not exist; although the first thing to be done in every dispute is to discuss it *in vacuo*, settle its mere *statics*, and *then* proceed to practical approximations.

10. One thing which, in my adolescence, used to puzzle me,—*not* as a Puritan,—I may venture, out of its place, to set down here, because it was, at all events, a puzzle, as it still is. I used to be frequently rebuked for “reminding” people of things, when it was impossible for me to conceive that “reminding” could take place. “See how you make her cry!—you remind her of the loss of her child, poor thing!” But I can truly say that it is impossible to remind me, for I never forget. Will this be understood? The fact is, I am always conscious of an undercurrent of memory, in the stream of which is glassed every event of my life in picture. It seems to me, indeed, as if I had, on the whole, a better recollection of other people’s history than they themselves have. At all events, it is impossible to “remind” me of my own past. The grief of ten years ago is present to me this very moment, at all moments, and with scarcely varying vividness.

11. Nearly connected with this observation will be

the one which is now to follow. I am quite familiar, being human, with that sad experience of human frailty which teaches us that we may over-estimate the strength of our own resolves, and go and do the very thing we had determined not to do. Yes, I know what that is! But there is one thing of the kind which ranked among my early puzzles, and which I am still unable to understand, finding nothing in my own experience to correspond with it. *Double lines of motive are unknown to me.* Here is a love-story. A young man is represented as taking a walk, fancying his object is to say vespers, when his real object, unknown to himself, is to meet his sweetheart. Well, everybody to whom I have mentioned my own doubts assures me that this is universal experience. It certainly is *not*, however common,—for I am a stranger to it. I quite know what it is to say to myself, (for example,) “If I meet Juliet, I will not kiss the ‘white wonder of fair Juliet’s hand;’” and then, when I meet Juliet, to break down in my will and to give the kiss. But of double lines of intent, one masking the other, I do most positively assert I know nothing,—I never had anything of the kind. Confused and mingled feelings are quite another thing; but feelings do not make intentions; half the beauty of life lies in unin-

tended things;* but when I have intentions at all, they are defined, conscious, and unconfused.

12. No language can express the astonishment with which I learnt that it is the way of men of business to name an earlier time than they really mean, because it is usually the case that others disappoint them. My own feeling was always one of great (I was told, excessive) anxiety to do the thing I had engaged to do in good time. But what did I discover? Why, that I was almost invariably (not always, of course) too soon for those with whom I had dealings! I was generally first at an appointment, and generally had things ready before they were wanted. Indeed, I cannot, without bitterness, think of the time and strength I used to waste in fretting, struggling, and harassing myself to comply with wishes which meant nothing.

13. One more puzzle, and it shall be the last. In my childhood I was taught, above all things, that an injury should never be revenged; that I was to return good for evil, and pray for such as did me wrong, but never to return a blow, or resent an affront. Of course, I did not expect to find the principle of this teaching

* Was it not Lady Hester Stanhope who said, "I am sure Lord Byron is a bad man,—he never does anything without intending it?"

uniformly carried out, but I certainly did expect it to be universally *recognised* among people calling themselves Christians, in however low a sense. Need it be said that I, in fact, found nothing of the kind? On the contrary, in all society and all literature not avowing a special or decided "religious" bent, I found that revenge was, like ignoble dinner-loving, a thing to joke about. It is taken for granted that people *should* revenge injuries; and not only so, but that people may give pain in exchange for pain, though unwillingly inflicted. Where is the writer who, if his own book had been severely reviewed, would not go out of his way to return the compliment?

I may close this brief account of my earlier surprises by two paragraphs, less specific than those which precede, but with the same general bearing.

My first intimation that the standard of what was expected from one human being to another was lower than the standard first formed by me came quite unexpectedly. Doubtless my own standard would have lowered itself quite soon enough; but at the time now in my mind, I was spending rather large sums of money for a purpose wholly disinterested. I had no idea to prosecute; I had no applause to gain. The first hint which reached me that I was making a sacrifice in the

least degree noticeable, (it was, in truth, not much,) was in a nasty speech of this kind,—“Yes, I suppose you think a good deal of yourself for doing”——such and such things,—the precise money sacrifice being mentioned.

I shall never forget that moment. I solemnly assert that it had never crossed my mind that what I was doing would be known, much less that it was a thing I *could* be supposed to be proud of. Indeed, it was *not*; it was not quite usual, and that is all. But the fact deserves to be recorded, that, at seventeen or eighteen years old, a Puritan lad derived from the accident of a mean suspicion his very first hint that others, decent, correct people, might have a lower standard even than his. At that time the world was, in my mind, pretty broadly divided into three classes of people :—I. Converted virtuous people ; II. Unconverted virtuous people ; III. Murderers, thieves, drunkards, and the like.

The other observation is this. When I met again, after a few years, young people whom I had known as boys, but who had now entered upon active life, I used to be very much surprised at the change I found in them. They had all alike, I perceived, grown worldly. Never shall I forget the shock which I experienced on

meeting, after an absence of two or three years, two boy friends of whom I had been passionately fond. They, in their turn, found me "strange" and "sarcastic." Much reading and much meditating upon these things, (which made me *very* wretched,) I learned that they were quite ordinary phenomena,—that all young people were supposed to go through the same change,—that it was the "discipline of life," or something of that kind. Well, I firmly resolved that I would never be "disciplined;" and I have, I flatter myself, kept the resolution. There is a change—which most people profess to dread and regret—that takes place later on in life, between thirty and forty, or thereabouts. But, since the risk is foreseen, why do they submit to undergo the change? Putting the case at the lowest, a prepared mind might surely manage to take the complaint in a mild form? Or is passive degradation, also, a part of the discipline of life?

Thus I have set down some of the things which, at my first entry into life, puzzled me,—a Puritan Boy, familiar only with the Bible, the Hymn-book, Milton, and his mother's knee. Years have passed away since I first conceived the design of writing out these little surprises. If I had described them in my adolescence as they arose, the description would have been more

vivid, more human, more full of a single-hearted light. But let them pass. I have written the truth, and can only end, and with entire deliberation, as I began:—The facts, which were at one time surprising discoveries to me, have long been familiar things; but the puzzles are puzzles still,—riddles which I have learnt by rote, but for ever insoluble.

III.

THE PROFITABLENESS OF UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS.

WHEN we look abroad upon the world, what is it that we see? Millions of people living more or less comfortable lives, but lives in no way characterised by purpose, by intensity, or moral elevation. The beaver instinct builds a city. The bee instinct fills it with capital. The gregarious instinct—which is apparently as strong among rooks and gorillas—brings and keeps a crowd together. And there is your world then?

But no, the circle is not yet filled in. If we may trust great observers like Mr Thackeray, we must add to the mere neutral rank-and-file whole armies of base, ignoble people who are yet not criminal—people who are jealous of the success of their neighbours, who are tuft-hunters, who are liars, who are cowards, bullies, hypocrites, and slanderers.

When we press upon writers and talkers whose

descriptions of life and human nature include very little more than the two preceding paragraphs, that if their picture be true, existence is not worth while, they probably call in to their aid the religious ideas and the hopes of another life. But this is absurd. For if the world be what they say it is, religious ideas have no basis. It may be admitted, however, that their case is plausible to the irreligious mind, or to any mind in moods of irreligion. Overwhelming is the spectacle of human life, unless it be looked at from a pinnacle of the temple in the very light of God. Sometimes when a human animal, seemingly meaner than a dog, and coarser than a bear, has made me unhappy, and thrust upon me, (because I was in a weak and foolish mood,) with unbearable force, the burden and mystery of life, I have thought to myself, "This inexplicable creature has his uses. Base he seems to be; but send him to the Crimea, and he will find his place upon the heights of Inkermann, and die more bravely than I could." But, again, this kind of apology for human baseness does not avail long; for if it were not for the base people, we should not want anybody to die in conflict! It is the baseness which creates the needs that end in Crimean wars and Balaklava charges.

But the circle of the world is still not filled in.

There are the people who seem born on purpose to account for the existence of all the rest ; there are heroes, and martyrs, and saints—known and unknown, distinguished and undistinguished. There are the great sages and the great prophets, the great doers, the great singers, and all the different orders of men and women who help to dignify the general mass of existence, to beautify it, and explain it. For if it were not for the light cast by the exception upon the rule, the world would be inexplicable. Who could make anything coherent, anything suggesting “beneficent design,” or the possibility of a beneficent end, out of these heaps of sordid life that fill the streets, and the tents, and the wigwams? Even if there were no cruelty, no rapine, no malignity, the spectacle would be unmeaning *but* for the exceptions. And when we add to the picture those lines which are contributed by teachers whose peculiar gift it seems to be to be able to read the small print of sin in the human heart, we may well call out in agony for something to put meaning into life! I do not, indeed, for myself, entirely believe these writers, but other people do ; and if the world is as they paint it, it is an unintelligible world.

There are two classes of persons who, at the first

glance, are seen to give the world a great deal of trouble, and to cause, as well as suffer, a great deal of pain. These are the people who are of types *below* the average of the time—criminals and the like; and then people who are *above* the average of the existing type, in some one or more particulars, without being perfect characters.

Now, in the latter class, if the brain be rather weak than strong, and if the moral superiority be precisely such as to prompt to acts of self-denial which fall within current lines of maxim, the individual gives no offence, and is probably idolised, whether in private, or in public, or both, for meritorious “self-sacrifice.” Of course the world does not object to see an occasional scapegoat take up a great load of suffering and bear it away. On the contrary, it admires, applauds, writes books about it: and goes on doing things which necessitate *more* self-sacrifice; and originate more murders.

But there are other types besides. There are born in every age people of types which are partially in advance of the average of the time, and whose very imperfections, *in relation to the time*, spring from that accidental superiority. Of such people, in all their different orders and degrees, which are many, it has

been said that if they would only consent to be, in their own eyes, a little worse, they might, in the eyes of mankind in general, be infinitely better. But they do *not* consent. They adhere, through all opposition, to their own ideas of right and wrong, and so they come into collision with mankind through their very goodness, which may, however, be leading them into mistaken courses. Such a man was Savonarola. Such a man was Defoe. Such a man was Shelley.

The way in which incomplete goodness may have the effect of badness, is not, perhaps, obvious at a glance; but let us try to arrive at an illustration. Some men are born with a natural deficiency of self-esteem, or, in other words, of the instinct of command and superiority. This defect, which would probably make a man, upon the whole, better than others, (because it would make him unexacting,) might yet lead him into great trouble, and, through him, those who happened to be in intimate relations of either business or friendship with him. Such a man would flinch from all forms of personal competition and rude self-assertion, from insisting on personal claims, from attempts to control the freewill of others, and, generally, from taking attitudes of superiority. But what must be the consequence? The average human being,

with much goodness of heart, has also much self-assertion, and is, indeed, a bit of a tyrant and bully,—at his best, he is so. All the relations of life are worked on this basis. The relation of master and servant, of husband and wife, of teacher and taught, even of friend and friend. In married life, the theory, however masked by Teutonic *sentiment*, is that the husband is a sort of patron and protector—the wife being inferior, subject, and indebted, giving love in exchange for bread and butter. Deny it who dares, this theory lurks at the bottom of the domestic ideal of the mass of mankind; and, in every relation of life, the current theory demands the sacrifice of self-respect somewhere. Now, such a man as we have just been describing, could never work such a theory, because he would be neither “proud” nor “humble,” but simply independent and truthful. If he were a fool, it would not much matter, because he would not have his thoughts about anything, and could be “managed.” But if he kept a conscience, or if the conditions happened to be exceptional, he might, out of very goodness, make a worse appearance than many a wicked man does. I take it that Shelley and Savonarola were both instances of men getting into horrible situations through imperfect goodness, which was yet too great

to be easily workable. The defects in the character of the poet, I am quite sure, I see clearly, nay, vividly; but, for all that, he was not only good, he was infinitely better than he has ever yet been painted by the hand of the kindest and most forbearing friend. Apart, too, from what he was in private life,—if he is taken merely for what he represents, one of those bright, exceptional souls who explain and make intelligible to us the poor sordid world of eating, and drinking, and shopping, and envying, and winning, and losing, and main drainage,—take away the type which he so splendidly exemplifies, and what remains but darkness that may be felt?

Let us try and look calmly even at a story as sad as Shelley's, painful as it is to confront it, and widely as honest minds differ about it. In the first place, we all acknowledge the value of a code of social order. What is more, if the code be honestly, impartially carried out, your scapegoat takes his turn with the rest to benefit by it. But let us suppose the worst that can be said of Shelley. Let us suppose that he was a mature man, instead of being nineteen, when he married; that he was a man who had the necessary faculties for understanding life, and not a man greatly over-weighted with emotive imagination. Let us sup-

pose that his "desertion" of his first wife—a worthy, ingenious, accomplished lady—had not only some share (along with the world that interfered) in killing her, but was, if you please, the sole cause of her death. Suppose that, and what then? We have then a man of most exquisite gifts and sensibilities,—capable, as he abundantly showed, of the most heroic self-abnegation,*—far in advance, take him all in all, not only of his own time, but of any time to which we can as yet dare to look forward,—and in the most hazardous, hot years of the very crowded life which, as a whole, gave the man Shelley to the world as he is, the man Shelley (putting it at the worst) sacrificed one woman. Now, how many women, and men too, have been sacrificed, in the crush and storm of affairs, by, say, the *Times* newspaper? by revolutionary patriots? by governments even in peaceful seasons? Was there ever a great thing done with hands unstained? Never, in this world—it seems impracticable. I worship the man Garibaldi; but I do not believe his sleepless hours, if he has any, are quite unhaunted. How many people, do you suppose, were "sacrificed" by Wellington, in the course of his career,—I do not mean people slain

* See Appendix.

in battle, or shot by military law for small offences, but people who, somehow or other, without his aiming at it, got put out of the way, because he felt that his purpose *must* roll on? King Robert Bruce is remembered with everlasting honour because he halted his army to take up a pregnant woman. But Bruce must have had many a worse thing on his conscience than omitting to do such a deed! Doubtless there were mothers, lovers, and friends, to whom Robert Stephenson must have appeared a sort of Moloch,—sacrificing interests dear to them for an end they did not care for. That great philanthropists, aiming to save or better the lives of masses, have sacrificed—and that unjustly and harshly—the lives of individuals near at hand, I know for a certainty,—I saw it with these eyes of mine. It was my lot, before I was fourteen, to be behind the scenes of a certain theatre of splendid philanthropy,—and I *saw the victims fall*. God forbid that I should speak—except in the light of His reconciling love—of these things. I hide my face in the dust amidst this great throng of fellow-sufferers, and if I spoke to such a one at all, it would be as Arthur Dimmesdale spoke to Hester Prynne,—as a “fellow-sufferer and fellow-sinner.” But the thing that is true must be spoken, or, at least, may be

spoken; and it is true that great things are rarely, if ever, accomplished without some ugly mark being left upon the conscience. Why, then, should one man be judged more harshly than another?

Savonarola was a very startling example of imperfect goodness in conflict with the time, and suffering, not because it was imperfect, but because it was too nearly perfect for those with whom it had to deal. It has been well hinted by the marvellous pen which has painted him in "*Romola*," that if he had been a worse man,—if he had been practicable and usable,—if he had been a man who kept within boundaries recognised by those in power,—he might have escaped his martyrdom, and also, which is the point, have kept his own character quite unstained. Of course, if he had been stronger and better *still*, the stain would never have come; but he was imperfect, and who are we to judge him? For it was not his badness, but his goodness, that brought him into collision with events which led, through his weakness, to his fall; and if he had been a little *less* good, he might have lived and died with an unstained conscience.

"Come up to my glory!" says God in His heaven. Steep is the way, and at every resting-place are tempters seeking whom they may devour. One man reaches

this table-land, another that, a third another still. God looks down, and in His love and truth judges them all. But who are we, that we should judge? A lesser man than Savonarola is told, as he ascends, that the way is about to become dangerous,—“Go no farther. It is well to have come so far; pause, then, and give us a turn!” So says the world, and the man pauses. While he is pausing, the storm that was just then rolling down the heights above to meet him has passed away, and he can now reach the next mountain-stair in safety. Reach it he does, and the voice of mankind applauds,—mankind does not see the inner stain; knows not of the compact with hell. But poor Savonarola would *not* pause; he needed no threat, and would make no compact. Onward he went, facing the storm, and then, weakened by toil and trial, he fell before the strong temptation with fangs of pain, that sprang forth upon him at the next stair in the heavenward way. “Come up into my glory!” says God, and he passes along through the burning flame. But was he a less man than his brother who halted on the lower stair? Will the first words he hears in Paradise be, “You have stained your garments seeking after utopian things, and whatever did you seek them for?”

Yet that is just what the world says to the man

who breaks down in straining after a grace too high for him; nay, to a man who simply says, "I seek." He is immediately blamed for "rejecting the only satisfaction possible to man,"—as if anybody could prove that man was ever intended to be satisfied,—and for "living in cloud-land, and making himself and others miserable by setting up ideals that never can be realised." Which of us has not heard this criticism, and that from people who, as far as *external comfort* is concerned, are the most determined of optimists?

It is *this*, indeed, which gives the sting to the treatment mankind as a body accord to the Shelleys, the Savonarolas, the Defoes, during their lifetime. It seems to be taken for granted that the Divine end is satisfied when the people in the streets go on comfortably, breaking no rules, and getting plenty to eat and drink. But really the difference between comfort and discomfort is so slight, and the mere fulfilment of a number of small animal ends so ignoble a matter, that the results are not commensurate with the machinery employed, if this be all. The very thing which puts sense into this tremendous spectacle is the existence of the men who cry for the moon. And it is a curious fact, that the anti-utopian writers and speakers are always apt enough at laying hold of the skirts of

any utopian “dreamer” who happens to get glorified or canonised—when it suits their purpose. Even among those who entertain the meanest opinions of human nature and its horizons, there are optimists who invent petty utopias, and plan and prosecute schemes for their realisation. I have read of them over and over again. Improve the drainage. Ventilate the houses. Let everybody be well educated. Apply the moral check to the population question. See that you have a world of respectable terraces and streets, inhabited by worthy, respectable people. There’s your paradise! And all I can say is, that I would rather live under a Reign of Terror, where the streets ran blood, than in such a world.

There will never be any such utopia as that. The end is not yet, and who knows what it may be, or whether we may not reach it through the cataclysmic method, and find ourselves at one swoop in presence of some new heaven and new earth? In the meanwhile, each one of us has his own proper work to do.

“All service is the same with God.” They that speed, or delve, or strike,* serve Him; they that stand

* Mr Holbeach vehemently opposed all dictation of modes of usefulness. His notion was, “Let every man do his own work faithfully,—that is, the thing he can do best,—and let no one pre-

and wait serve Him ; they who succeed, and they who fail. He accepts the service of the unblemished soul that may lay its hands upon the very ark of His testimony. He accepts the service of the soul that, stained through its own weakness in the conflict, yet marches with the Grand Army. "He that is not against us is for us." Not only is it out of the power of any one human soul to enforce duty ; it is out of the power of any man to *dictate* duty to his brother. When the throne is set, and the books are opened, and the heavens and the earth flee away from the Presence, how much that now takes the name of self-denial may show but dingily in the pure light of Truth ! How much that is now pelted for Selfishness may receive from the hands of the Judge the White Stone that is the hero's prize ! "To him, ye sons of men, to him whom you sullenly condemned, was whispered a word that you did not hear. But because he listened and obeyed, I set him on my right hand, and reverse before angels and men

sume to judge of the utility of his brother's work. If a man can write verses better than he can do anything else, it is mere mischief-making to try and turn him into a Sunday-school teacher. It is impossible to tell what good a verse may do ; it may make a hero, a sage, or a philanthropist some day." In this way my friend would go on to maintain that absolute freedom was the only path towards the forever-receding Best. "Everybody do his own work, and everybody leave everybody else alone," that was his formula.—ED.

the decision you passed upon him." Ah, the word, the whisper that only the one soul hears! The world says angrily, "You defy us!" The poor bleeding soul says humbly, "I obey God!" Be it so. The conflict must proceed. Every man to his own work, lonely or not!

"Ye servants of the Lord,
Each in his office wait,
 Obedient to His heavenly word,
 And watchful at the gate!
 Look that your lamps be bright,
 And trim the golden flame;
 Gird up your loins as in His sight,
 For awful is His name!"

It is but a little while, ye sorrowing ones, and the lamp will need no more trimming; the loins no more upgirding. And till that hour come, your task is still to trim the lamp, though you cannot see what light it casts. If, perchance, you have only one single thread of hope or faith to cling to, cling to it all the more. If you see the sun, but cannot feel warmed by it, still say, *There is the sun*, and blessed be the light! If you cannot even see it, beware of saying that it does not shine. Cling for your life to the thing you know, and some day, some happy hour, in this world or in the next, your little talisman of trust will prove to be

a King's token, and place you in the path to His throne. Be true then, in the last despairs of sin and sorrow, to what you have, and it shall be added to. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.

IV.

CAVALIERS AND ROUNDHEADS.

MANKIND (that word always meaning, in such cases, only the particular section of mankind with which we are ourselves acquainted, for the world contains a million million people) have been very variously divided into classes, upon ethical grounds more or less obvious. I am about to suggest a fresh classification.

I propose to divide mankind, for purposes of social criticism, into two main classes in the first instance—those two classes including the whole of what is called society—*le grand monde*—

1. Cavaliers.

2. Roundheads.

Then into two sub-classes, which are intended to include the “half-world,” or the people who are more or less *out of society*—

1*a*. Bohemian Cavaliers.

2*a*. Bohemian Puritans.

Your Cavalier is by natural affinity, whatever accident may make of him, a Tory. He believes strongly in persons and institutions. He knows nothing of "principles"—does not like them; does not understand "rights"—does not like them. His mind is wholly concrete. He is a very bad reasoner, but has considerable tact in the realm of the personal. He has the gift of attaching people, and is what is called "sound at heart." As he has no notion of equal rights, or of a *universale* of any kind, he can only proceed straight ahead upon lines of personal relationship as they arise to him. He is good at submitting to his superiors. He is good at ruling his inferiors. In both particulars he is, in the type specimen, a capital fellow. So he is, in dealing with his equals, so long as the relationships are simple, and so long as his equals are also his likes. But a case of *magis pares quam similes* takes the wind out of his equanimity. If you differ from him, it is a personal affront. If you differ from him *and his favourite institutions too*, it is a crime. He wants (as Sydney Smith said, with reference to Tory squires and Dissenters) to shave your head and put you in a strait-waistcoat. He is rather too ready to quarrel. "'Sdeath, sir!" says he, and whips out his sword at provocation too slight—for

me. But he is also good at making it up, and bears no malice. He is never by any chance a teetotaller, or on any side of any question analogous to the teetotal side. He is a very hearty, affectionate, loyal fellow, and full of humour. But, unhappily, he has no idea of *Truth*. Hence he is, *ex necessitate*, a persecutor, and every new truth has to fight him; for he never knows the right until it is concreted into a fact.

This type, the Cavalier type, is that which, perhaps, includes the largest number of people in the world. Of course it varies. Sometimes you have the bad without the good. Then you get, in an extreme case, a Bomba of Naples; in a case less extreme, a Frederick of Prussia. In private life, you have then a bullying schoolboy, or a harsh churchwarden, or a tyrannical magistrate. For the most part, however, the Cavalier or Tory type of character is excellent in private personal relations. It is so partly by defect, (because it is not liable to be affected by certain disturbing causes germane to the opposite type,) but chiefly by the directly concrete or personal nature of its structure.

Sometimes, of course, it is the lot of this type to fall into misfortune. In that case, if there be great intelligence, the individual is apt to become cynical. In-

deed, the Tory or Cavalier type so naturally gravitates in that direction, that it may be safely said a cynic must be a Tory, whatever he calls himself. Logically, the Cavalier or Tory type has no right to a faith at all. It does not perceive this ; but when things go ill with it, the collisions of fate make chinks in its tenement of thought, and the light creeps in under the disguise of suspicion or doubt.

The Tory or Cavalier mind is but little open to argument. You must "get round" it, if you want to do anything new. It is fond of children and old people, and kind to paupers. But it would strenuously resent the idea that there never should be any paupers, because then it would lack one element of its present sense of superiority. It is magisterial, however kind. It likes to put down what it does not admire. That, indeed, is its only notion of the way to get along in this world. It has its own idea of what is right and pleasant, and will, if possible, enforce it. It invokes the policeman. Pull-devil, pull-baker. "You try, and I'll try, and the Law will see all fair." It has no opinions ; only dogmas, which it will fight for as if they were blood-relations. It has no notion of Right and Wrong, except as things which may be categorised, and commanded or forbidden. There-

fore, like Dr Newman, it hates "Liberalism." Religion, truly speaking, it has none; it *cannot* have. It has a genial superstition which answers its purpose. What it believes in is a rule imposed by a person, and embodied in an institution. If the rule is broken, it will wink, so long as the breaking is done quietly, and with an acknowledgment of the rule. It looks at such things in a gentlemanly spirit. Hence its proper "religion" is, as King Charles said, that of "Roman Catholicism." Having, in strictness, no morality at all,—though morality so called is what it swears by above all things,—and looking upon any established authority as a sufficient final cause for anything it finds existing under a moral name, it is greatly puzzled when a truly moral mind—a mind which believes there is a right or wrong independently of rules—comes forward to maintain that disorder must *not* be winked at; that its existence is a presumption that the rule does not cover the facts, and that a fresh rule is needed. The well-known dialogue of Julian and Maddalo expresses the conflict perfectly.* In fine, to use the language of the phrenologist, the Cavalier character has moderate (or small) Conscientiousness, large Veneration, large Attach-

* See Appendix.

ment, and is rather weak in the department of the logical faculties.

To the Cavalier type stands opposed the Puritan or Roundhead. The Puritan has so far advanced upon the Cavalier, that he discerns that if the rule means right it must be obeyed. No winking! No "indulgences!" No incessant "absolutions" from the mere instruments and organs of the rule! Who is this that forgiveth sin, which is the function of God only? Thus your Puritan makes a stand for *Conscience*, as opposed to mere personal veneration; and a bold stand he makes, and a good fight he fights. This is my rule; I must obey, or perish; the world grows too dark for me to see my way if I dodge it. And if I do sin, (as, alas, I too often do!) I am not able to throw off the burden of it as lightly as you, my Cavalier friend. No man can "absolve" me—no outward ceremony give me the smallest ease. How can you absolve me? Absolve me for what? For the specific sin? But I know—I feel—that whoso offendeth in one point is guilty of all; or, that the total holiness of God is arrayed against one act of wrong-doing. My life, then, cannot be so gay as yours. It is not because I am "virtuous" that "there should be no more cakes and ale," but be-

cause we are all sinful ; and I have but a poor appetite—like a widow just bereaved.

How very little the Cavalier understands all this, may be witnessed in the perpetual conflict of the two types in daily life. Read “Hudibras,” and, especially, read the old annotated edition of Grey, with its droll quotations from anti-Puritan writers, and you cannot fail to see the entire misintelligence which exists on the part of the Cavalier mind ; for it is on that side that the defective moral intelligence chiefly lies. On the side of the Puritan there is, indeed, defective *sympathy* ; and if your good Roundhead had a little more of it, he might come to understand the Cavalier better still. But, alas, your Puritan’s weak point is this lack of sympathy. Hence he does not understand the drama, and he reads his Bible in the spirit of a schoolmaster.

The Puritan may very readily *become* a persecutor, like the Cavalier ; but the earnest Cavalier *must* be one. The Puritan draws a sharp line between what is “divine” and what is “human,” and will not only himself stand to what he thinks has divine authority behind it, but will try and enforce it, at least negatively, upon others. He is superior to the Cavalier, in that he sees that the rule, if divine, is to be obeyed without evasion or winking ; but he does not perceive

that, since any man may err in his reading of the rule, his position may become as false as that of any nose-slitting Laud of the Cavalier side. Yet as this difficulty, however little foreseen by him, does arise, in fact, from his theory of things, it so happens that freedom of Conscience, pure and simple, is what your Puritan constantly finds himself betrayed into fighting for. What he says is, "I must obey God rather than man." What that *comes* to is, "I must, at the bidding of conscience, resist any and every form of personal authority."

Thus the Cavalier, High-Churchman, Tory, or Roman Catholic (who are of the same family) may well dislike the Puritan, or, as Dr Newman says, "hate Liberalism." For Liberalism means Conscience, however crude; while the other thing means Concrete Will, or Personal—*i.e.*, Physical—Force, till submission is compelled.

Now, the Puritan or Roundhead line of thought tends naturally to get into Radical or Rationalistic grooves, *if your Puritan be unjustly handled by the Other Side. And then only.* For the antagonism between what is concrete or external-personal, and what is abstract or internal-personal, begins only when one person tries to compel another to conform. That

moment, of course, the divergence between conviction and affection begins; and it *may* go on till injury is done to the natural sentiments of veneration and personal love.

In fact, it often does so go on; for at the extreme left of Rationalistic thought we too frequently find coldness, hardness, and what is called the Manchester tone of mind. This, it must be owned, is very repulsive; and very horrible, and even deterring, is the fact that teachers and propagandists of "free thought" in matters of religion are so commonly neglected by their associates, disciples, and congregations. It cannot be denied that on the Cavalier or Tory side there is apt to be more personal cordiality—a firmer clinging to obligations imposed by what is past, or what we had ourselves no share in. The best of our children's literature seems, in the present day, to have come from High-Church pens; and if we want to sketch or to think of a man amiably steadfast to his dependants, we naturally recur to the old-fashioned, or Cavalier, or Tory type.

However, all sorts of crossings of species do and must occur; and blended specimens are, thank God, common enough to sustain our hopes. For my own part, I say, Give me Radical opinions and Tory sen-

timents; and sometimes we get them. But if there is anything I abhor, it is a mere *dilettante* Tory or Cavalier,—a man who would naturally be inclined to take the other side, but permits himself to be seduced by his personal tastes into a lying attitude. This is just as if a man, called upon to take sides in a battle for life between two bands, were to carry over his sword to the wrong side, because the other smelt of garlic.

On all points in relation to which his religious instincts do not enlighten or stimulate him, the Puritan is apt to stand at one with the Cavalier in his views of duty. The proof of this exists in melancholy abundance in the implied teaching of the stage on the one hand, and the moral lesson-book on the other. Analysed to its lowest elements, the morality taught in the received plays and in the received moral text-books are identical; and both are distinguished by the same characteristics. Both teach unquestioning submission to authority, and both exalt the importance of self-sacrifice, *on other people's part*, when the persistence of the "other people," in a particular moral attitude, would disturb existing arrangements. To put the same thing differently, both assume that, on all questions of moral truth, the latest possible discovery

is made, and that our only wants at present are better-cooked potatoes, and some more policemen up at the West End.

The respectable portions of these two classes, Cavalier and Roundhead, keep the solid-pudding interests of the world going,—an important work, which could never be carried on by the poor restless innovators. They also, between them, keep up a system of contrivances and palliatives for curing or repressing disorders and inconveniences—the Cavalier side doing its work, on the whole, the more genially, and perhaps helping the bodies of men and women more than their souls, which are looked after by the Roundhead party. Unfortunately, however, in keeping the public peace, the two sides play into each other's hands in the interest of the devil, being thereunto driven by the Bohemians, pure and simple, the Sons of Belial who infest society. In this bad work the Cavalier is most conspicuous, as would be expected. His whole scheme of the universe being one of pull-devil, pull-baker, he sees nothing for it but sticking to the rules in reality, *or in pretence*. Too often there is more pretence than reality—not because he is false, but because facts will not bend to rules; and when the rules have to break because the

facts are growing too big for them, (as happens every now and then with the best rules,) our friend the Cavalier has no resource but alternate winking and cat-o'-nine-tails. You cannot make him understand a principle; he thinks you intend the same thing as the French call *un principe*, and taunts you with meaning moonshine. Hence the Cavalier's theory of life amounts to this, or, say, is *forced* to amount to this—Social Order at all costs; and as to what is going on under cover of the order—hush! This is invariably the way in which any theory of power works out. We see it in the “morality” of Roman Catholic populations almost everywhere; and we may see it at our own doors in the morality of a population from which the imprint of the old Romanist ideal has not yet been worn off. “I, an external authority, have a right to prescribe *absolutely** to your conscience—to dictate final right and wrong to you; but, don't be alarmed! I keep two lists of sins—the venial and the deadly; I can give you absolution from time to time, *if you confess my power by coming to me*; and I can grant you Indulgences, *if you will confess my power by strengthening it with your tribute-money.*” That, and nothing

* The necessity of external authority in transitional conditions, as an instrument of Divine *Expediency*, is admitted on all hands.

else, must, in a shape more or less crude, be the outcome of every scheme of Authoritative Truth.

Some hope, some degree of resource, would lie in the Puritan or Roundhead side in times of social difficulty, if it were not for the Sons of Belial and the mere men of the world. On the Puritan side we sometimes (though, I do think, very rarely) get the hypocritical type; and that, of course, is obstructive. But the Cavalier, in the degenerate form, is either a mere worldling, or a pleasure-seeking blackguard—a son of Belial. These are the men who, turning liberty to licence in their beastly lives, make alarmed goodness exclaim for a military law of life; or they are, in a quieter type, the men who, treating with incredulous disdain all motives of action that end not with the hour, make every proposal for increased reliance upon other motives more perilous. Of the latter class, enormously large as it always is, one need not speak much. It is the grief, the despair, the dead-weight of all noble effort. It is the class which stings men like Tennyson and Carlyle into scorn; and even provokes the calm, slow Wordsworth into indignation that *borders* on scorn. But scorn is useless—indignation is useless. Poet, priest, philosopher, martyr! you might

as well try to quicken a log of wood by an electric shock as to animate these dead bones !

One thing you may always depend on from them—obstruction, in the name of religion and social order. The worst thing that can befall Vice and Worldliness is change for the better ; at least they think so. Their only religion is the thing they find existing, and they don't like alteration. Or, perhaps,—and this is a frequent case,—they have a true instinct that a *bad order strictly administered, if counted good and held fetich*, is a first-rate regimen for sheltering their own crimes. It thus happens that improvements that have anything alarming about their first aspect, are compelled to encounter the opposition of routine good people, reinforced by mighty armies of the very scum of the earth ; for the routine good people are not ashamed to accept such aid. “ Alas ! ” may the saddened reformer say, “ I respect conscience, however mistaken it may seem to me. You, the good Puritan sticklers for the old order, I could deal with ; and, more or less, even with the good Cavaliers. But when the remonstrances of the good people are covered and reinforced by the hue and cry of these Sons of Belial going in for the fetich which protects them, I confess the scolding and the yelling appal me.”

Hence the deepest, truest word on any of the wrongs that, by their horrible blackness, seem to darken the very heavens above us, remains unspoken. There is never any trusted thinker who will come forward and speak his real thought on the nearest, most intimate, most imminent of human difficulties. If he speaks above a whisper,—if he speak more than half his thought,—he is torn in pieces,—those who are dearest to him being first trampled down before his eyes. A powerful argument for the celibacy of any one who has “a passion for reforming mankind.”

Out of all this confused conflict is developed, or at least produced, a fourth class,—the Puritan Bohemians,—a class composed of particles which the general mass of the body-social will not take up, or which do not gravitate so uniformly towards the mass as to attach themselves. The cause of the non-adhesion, on whichever side the rupture commences, is that these particular Puritans find themselves, rightly or wrongly, unable to live by some portions of the code of the Cavaliers and Puritans who make up the mass. This may in various ways drift them into attitudes which will be dealt with as if they were hostile. Sometimes a sense of duty may make compliance with the code

impossible. Sometimes an attempt to challenge it results in expulsion from within the boundaries of the realm which counts the code sacred. Sometimes conscience, fault, folly, and misfortune conspire to the same end. Anyhow, there does exist in every society a scattered population of outsiders and half-outsiders—a half-world of opinion and conduct, which may be called Puritan-Bohemian. Puritan it is, in regard that its members disclaim all wrong intent, claim to be guided by higher laws than those which displace them from the rank and file, and, considering the risks of so arduous a position, may be presumed to expend extraordinary force of conscience (more than would suffice for the regulation of a dozen ordinary lives) in saving their souls alive. Bohemian it is, inasmuch as it is a world which lies outside the camp of the congregation, and has to make its bricks of social happiness out of such straw as it can furtively gather up, or without straw altogether.

In this Puritan-Bohemian half-world are all colours and shades of opinion and conduct, just as in the whole-world of the Cavalier or Puritan side. Some extreme point of dissidence is, of course, presupposed; but none, by the definition, which is not consistent with pure intent; and, probably, none which can-

not appeal to universally-honoured names for shelter. But it must not be inferred that an extreme *attitude* is voluntarily assumed—that may be compulsory. There is no extreme of *opinion* which may not be found in any circle you please to name. Every “heresy,” social, religious, political, philosophical, may be found, under shelter of respectabilities, in most unlikely corners of life; where position and natural tendencies conspire to keep people neutral in attitude. But upon a certain number of those who hold “heresies,” of whatever kind, will always be *forced* a choice of alternatives which puts them on their conscience. These will be made the scapegoats. These will be the forlorn hope, over whose dead bodies the silver-shod will at last condescend to walk up to victory. And as the great story is run on from chapter to chapter, the Cavalier slits the ear of the Roundhead; and the Roundhead looks askance at the Bohemian Roundhead; and the Sons of Belial applaud severity, because it is good for their little game. The new truth cries in the wilderness; and if you want to hear it—why, you have to seek it in out-of-the-way places.

Melancholy, indeed, and dispiriting it is to notice the incessant misintelligence among good men and women; the slowness to see that neutral platforms are possible,

on which mutual exchanges of half-truths may take place. What can be more amazing than the tone once assumed as a regular thing, and now too generally assumed, by the Cavalier side to the Puritan side? There is a tremendous mass of decent, church-going people who are quite ready to echo the old cries of Mawworm! Hypocrisy! Saint! and the like, whenever the Puritan side come forward as denouncers of *what both sides believe to be wrong*. It is totally impossible to cram into the genuine Cavalier mind the notion that habitual piety can mean anything but self-righteousness. In vain will you say that you have no trust, for time or for eternity, but in God's free love; in vain will you live the most unassuming of lives—you are still a "saint," a self-righteous man—a Pharisee,—perhaps a "hypocrite." And, believe me, you will have to keep so, in Cavalier eyes, until *you do at Rome as Romans do*. That will whitewash you anywhere; nothing else will.

Words of despair! But let them stand. Words which make human society appear a corporation of self-important wild beasts! But let them stand. There is hope at the bottom of the box.

A grave error is committed by Puritan Bohemians in general—an error which cuts them off from that

source of power which lies in all *generous* confederation. Stung by their exclusion from the dress-circles of the great amphitheatre of life, they too often become untrue to themselves, and accept, with degrading eagerness, the first proffers of *amende* which wait upon casual prosperities :—

“ Now has descended a serener hour,
And, with inconstant fortune, friends return ;
Though suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
Which says, ‘ Let scorn be not repaid with scorn ! ’ ”

Be it so. Let scorn be shut out, then. Let us also acknowledge that every such Bohemian who breaks way *back* again over the barrier, and by force of goodness or of gift compels the dress-circle to make room for him on the benches, does a good work, damages a prejudice, and perhaps makes a breach through which others may follow. But the first duty of such a one is surely to be loyal to his own order. True, the world of Puritan Bohemians is exceedingly apt to be a world “ in which the excellence of each separate man is an inflamed individualism, which only separates him the more ; ” but that is, indeed, an infamy. Does the dress-circle invite a member of the half-world, saying, “ Friend, you have fairly beaten us ; come up hither ! ” It is well. But let the conqueror go straight back to

his brethren, with the newly-acquired strength and courage, and help *them*,—help them to unite in a world of their own, which may furnish a platform from which the invitation may be returned :—“ You have invited one or more of us, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Silver Shoes,—we now send *you* a card,—we, the exiles of duty, the victims of crotchets, the halt and maimed of social order, the fanatics of the faith in right, the lunatics of trust, the over-seasoned with that salt of the earth which keeps us all from putrefaction ! We offer you a neutral ground on which to meet. We hold you pledged to nothing. We shall take care to keep you disembarassed. We invite you to no complicity in any heresy about worship, or property, or the domestic ideas, or education, or diet, or anything else. But we are weak enough to desire that you should recognise that we are not cannibals, and therefore we invite you to spend an hour at our little club, the PURITAN BOHEMIANS, (Blank) Square, on the (blank) of (blank) next, at (blank) o’clock. *N.B.*—Women and children not excluded.”

THE GAME OF TRADITION.

THERE is a well-known fireside game, in which a story is whispered at one end of a social circle, and passed round to the other. A tells it softly into the ear of B; B communicates it to C; C to D; and so it goes on till it reaches Z, who tells it aloud for A to hear. It is then found that the story, in the process of transit, has so changed colour and features that its own father cannot recognise it.

I believe this is *universally* the case, although I never witnessed the playing of the game. Only one precaution is, in my opinion, necessary—namely, that A should have two written copies of what he tells B, one to be retained by the latter as a check. This guards against its being objected that A is as likely to have forgotten what he said, as B, C, D, and the rest to have passed it on erroneously.

I have seen the invention of this game attributed to the late Archbishop Whately; but, by whomsoever in-

vented, it is a capital idea, and very fairly illustrates what is every day exhibited on the grand scale in the world at large,—the almost total incapacity of the average human being either to express his own meaning accurately, or to understand another's. How often, alas, have I had occasion to notice in life, that for one person who can listen and understand, there are a thousand who can make a speech! I do not wonder at the doctrine that it is necessary, in self-defence, for every man who endeavours to live with exactitude to speak two dialects—an esoteric and an exoteric. So weak is the sense of justice in most minds, so bent are they upon their own thoughts, and so little desirous of treating yours fairly, that you cannot escape the incessant temptation to despair of human progress altogether. The old lady who, after listening to an attempt to prove the existence of a God, said, "Ah, but I think there *is* a God, for all his talk!" was not a fancy. She was Mrs Grundy, whom we all know. I have met her ten thousand times, and lapsed into hopeless silence before her, because I saw how fearfully thick was her head, and how fearfully long her tongue.

In the course of your life you have, no doubt, been sometimes asked conundrums. Well, now, tell me

how often you have heard one asked properly. For my own part, I do most solemnly asseverate that, nine times out of ten, I have to go through the process of restating the question before I can address myself to the answer. Very frequently you can see, before you attempt to guess the answer, that the riddle is wrongly put. "My dear sir," you say, "it is impossible that *that* should be the conundrum! And it is impossible that there should be any answer to it!" And then, applying the principle of Excluded Middle, you make the conundrum over again for your questioner; upon which he smiles, asks you another, which he is quite sure is correct; and makes precisely the same sort of blunder in putting it. And he is not a fool either, but an intelligent fellow, with a keen sense of humour.

Mr Ruskin (who has been accused of arrogance—most unjustly, as it appears to me) has complained of the difficulty he finds in getting understood, and has added that he observes other writers have to endure the same inconvenience. This shows——

I beg pardon; but I feel as if I might usefully interrupt myself, in order to employ an opportunity of illustration which this very paragraph affords me. There are overwhelming chances that somebody, reading this paragraph, will walk off and say that I agree

with Mr Ruskin in his views about political economy. And this caution will go for nothing ; it will *still* be said.*

But to continue. This shows, I was about to say, that Mr Ruskin keeps a conscience, and tries to enter into other people's meanings. No doubt he makes mistakes, and misapprehends at times—we all do so ; but the man who is anxious, in the first instance, to do justice to what he hears or reads by thoroughly absorbing what is meant to be conveyed, is on the road to truth, and will some day reach it. I heartily subscribe to these words of Mr Ruskin :—

* Perhaps this will be thought “arrogant,” but there is ample excuse for it. I once told, in print, the story of a very terrible execution. Being then on the side of death-punishment, I guarded myself with the nicest care from writing one word which could reasonably be twisted into a condemnation of it. The very first person that spoke to me on the subject of the story was a man of education and intelligence, a member of a liberal profession, and looked up to in his own circle. But what do you think he said? “Oh, I’m so glad to find you’re opposed to capital punishment, Mr Holbeach!” And what do you think *I* said? I said nothing, but fled in dumb despair. Once upon a time I said, to a very acute and distinguished man, “Is it possible that in such and such parts of your book you meant what the reviewers have credited you with? I read their account of your meaning, but it seems to me inconsistent with what you *must* mean.” He replied, “Yes, certainly ; I never wrote anything of the kind.” “Then,” I continued, “why do they say you did?” He laughed merrily, and answered, “*Because it’s wrong, I suppose!*”

“I observe always, in the case of my own writings, that if ever I state anything which has cost me any trouble to ascertain, and which, therefore, will probably require a minute or two of reflection from the reader before it is accepted, that statement will not only be misunderstood, but in all probability taken to mean something very nearly the reverse of what it does mean. Now, whatever faults there may be in my modes of expression, I know that the words I use will always be found, by Johnson’s Dictionary, to bear, first of all, the sense I use them in ; and that the sentences, whether awkwardly turned or not, will, by the ordinary rules of grammar, bear no other interpretation than that I mean them to bear ; so that the misunderstanding of them must result, ultimately, from the mere fact that their matter sometimes requires a little patience. And I see the same kind of misinterpretation put on the words of other writers, whenever they require the same kind of thought.”

A man once insisted to me that he had been told by a lawyer that the transfer of a wife by the halter-and-shilling process in the market-place was a legal matrimonial process—making Gill, who had before belonged to Jack, the lawful chattel of Tom. Now, no lawyer could ever have said anything so absurdly

false. How, then, did the misunderstanding arise? Simply from the inexact use of language. Let us imagine the whole story.

The halter-and-shilling rite is being performed in the market-square of a provincial town, when my informant, the surgeon, full of disgust, comes upon his friend the attorney, and the following dialogue ensues:—

Surgeon. Cannot that sort of thing be put a stop to?

Attorney. Oh, dear, no! There is no law against it.

Surgeon. Do you mean to tell me that this is a legal transaction?

Attorney. Quite.

And there the matter ends—a wrong idea being carried away by the surgeon. All that the attorney meant was that there was nothing in English law to prevent three free people—Jack, Gill, and Tom—making fools of themselves with a rope, a shilling, and some gibberish, any more than there is a law to prevent gipsies or thieves “palling” as they please with their own ceremonies. The procedure was not in itself unlawful in the sense of being criminal—that was what the attorney intended to convey. The surgeon thought the “transaction” was “legal” in a positive

sense, and went and misled other people into thinking with him.

This is only a specimen of the kind of misunderstanding of which daily life is full—so full, that the wonder is how the business of the world goes on at all. The curious part of the case is, that people will assent to this in general terms when you point it out, and then go and forget it just when they ought to recollect it. The time for remembering an important general observation like this, is when we hear something of what another has said or done which is made the subject of unfavourable comment; in a word, it is when scandal is being talked, or when partisan praise is being given, though praise does not so often stand in need of being subjected to a discount as dispraise. We should bear in mind that *nobody* possesses the power of relating a fact exactly as it happened—that very, very few can repeat words exactly as they heard or read them, and that a change which may be inappreciable to ordinary minds *until its consequences are pointed out*, may be, in reality, of the most vital moment in an intricate story. I have at this moment in my memory a correspondence in which the verb “excuse” was, by successive stages, changed into—1. defend; 2. justify; 3. applaud; 4. encourage! I have

actually under my observation another instance, in which a man who said "he did not at the moment see how something could be avoided," was reported to have said, "there was no possible way of getting out of it; it *must* be so." Now, even in the driest, simplest matters of business, it is easy to perceive what mischief may arise from such mistranslations by incompetent tongues of things said, written, or done; but with what dreadful force does the same observation apply in the great crises of existence, when complications of strong feeling and hurrying events conspire to darken the understanding, stimulate the imagination, and pervert the honest will!

The popular saying that one story is good until you hear the other, gives rough expression to the idea that only imperfect dependence is to be placed upon one-sided reports, of whatever kind. Yet, unless the solemnities of judicial proceeding compel the vulgar to think of it, the idea is seldom remembered for the purposes of life. And, after all, it is only cultivated people who have made both life and literature a *study*, and who are in the habit of thinking at white heat about everything great and small; it is only this very limited number of persons who can be aware of the possibilities of error which underlie the best-connected

and best-supported stories. It is not only that positive solid falsehoods—myths—will in a few hours gather round a nucleus of fact—the falsehood being solid in proportion to the nebulosity of the central point ; it is not only that, though that is, so to speak incredibly, staggeringly true ; but small matters of fact get turned round and twisted into new shapes by different brains and different tongues, until the truth, as it really existed, is recognisable only by one or two persons who were actual sharers in the transaction, and hardly by them. I find a striking illustration to my purpose among the collected poems of the late James Montgomery, and will let him tell his story in his own words. The reference is to a myth which had got abroad about some supposed results of his imprisonment in York Castle. I have a good deal abbreviated what he writes, and the case is, in consequence, rather understated than overstated. This is what he says :—

“ I shall venture to prolong this new introduction to my ‘ Prison Amusements ’ by mentioning a circumstance which requires explanation from myself, who alone can give it. In the ‘ Table-Talk ’ of the late Mr William Hazlitt, vol. i. p. 371, I find this paragraph, which I quote literally :—‘ Mr Montgomery, the inge-

nious and amiable poet, after he had been shut up in solitary confinement for a year and a half, for printing the Duke of Richmond's letter on Reform, when he first walked out in the narrow path of the adjoining field, was seized with an apprehension that he should fall over it, as if he had trod on the brink of an abrupt precipice.'

"Now, there is not one word of pure fact in this anecdote, which, nevertheless, was intended to be the truth throughout, believed to be so, and published to excite compassion towards the sufferer. I never printed the Duke of Richmond's letter on Reform; I was never shut up for a year and a half in solitary confinement; and I never felt any fear of falling over the edge of a narrow path through a flat field.

"During my reveries in prison, I often proposed that my first ramble, on recovery of my freedom, should be down by the river, under the trees, across the fields beyond, and away to the windmill.

"On one fine morning in the middle of April I was liberated. Immediately afterwards I took my walk in that direction. While I was thus traversing the fields—not with any apprehension of falling over the verge of the narrow footpath, but from mere wantonness of instinct, in the joy of liberty long wished for, and,

though late, come at last—I wilfully diverged from the track, crossing it now to the right, then to the left, like a butterfly fluttering here and there, making a long course and little way, just to prove my legs, that they were no longer under restraint, but might tread where and how they pleased, and that I myself was in reality abroad again in the world. Having once or twice mentioned the frolic in company, I know not through how many mouths it may have transmigrated before it reached Mr Hazlitt in the form under which he has presented it.”

This surely is a very instructive instance of mis-reported fact. But how many of my readers will carry away from this article the lesson it attempts to teach? How many will remember, the next time they bear a bit of scandal, that it is absolutely *impossible* to report a thing exactly as it happened?—that two different people *must* see different things and tell different things of the same scene? How many will remember the hackneyed tale of Sir Walter Raleigh at his prison window, and the moral of “The Three Black Crows” fable? We quote that fable to our children by the fireside, as if it were useful for guidance in life; and then, in our own lives, the very next time anybody offers us three black crows we take them in our hands,

cherish them, and pass them on—a little bigger and a little blacker.

Among important causes of misunderstanding I reckon some of the most influential to be—

I. Differences of moral tone and of sentiment.

II. Differences of vocabulary.

III. Poverty of imagination and downright ignorance.

IV. Differences in the *fulness* of people's memories.

The differences of moral tone that exist between human beings who are ostensibly classifiable in the same rank, and perhaps living inevitably in intimate relations with each other, are enormous, and of themselves fatal to good understanding. For example, disinterestedness is something quite chimerical to large numbers of people. "How much are you to get for this?" said the ever-infamous Napoleon I. to a man who was warmly interceding for another. And thus it is in human life. What one man speaks like a young virgin, the other hears like an old pander. So, in fact, it befalls every day and every hour. Nor is there any remedy of speedy applicability. Differences of what is called "sentiment" are of less consequence, (or *may* be of less consequence—it all depends on the

other factor;) but I have in my mind an actual case in which one man discovered that he had for months been going on a wrong tack in a discussion with another—discovered it through that other letting fall the words, “I don’t believe a man radiates moral sentiment.” Now, as one of the two persons *did* believe that, and had been proceeding upon the supposition that the other did, what blundering there must have been between them!

Again, misunderstanding cannot be escaped when, by the word “love,” one person means personal affection with only a restrained general good-will, while the other means personal affection and unlimited benevolence; or where A means by the word what it stands for in a transcendental poet, while B means the household form of the “passion” which is uniformly supposed to subside with time and twopenny trouble; or where C adopts, through some deep-lying instinct of race, or through education, or both, the semi-Oriental idea of love with all its degradations; while D is guided by the Teutonic conception. And so on through a thousand illustrations.

Differences of vocabulary constitute a very grave cause of misunderstanding among human beings. Little as it may be remembered, *every* change of cul-

ture or mental habitude induces a change; greater or less, in the force of words to the mind of the individual. And at every remove which occurs the chances of misintelligence are multiplied. Now, inasmuch as some few people are for ever moving, while others stand nearly still all their lives, what awful scope for mutual mistake there must be between them! And the mistakes do actually occur; and tempers are spoiled, and energies scattered, and affections wounded, for want of a more cautious intelligence in the use of language—for lack of attention to browns and grays of signification.

I have mentioned ignorance and poverty of imagination as common causes of misunderstanding. I mean that we are all apt to assume that when we know “the facts,” and have attended to the arguments in any question of philosophy or conduct, we are at the end of the story. But we should remember that we can never be sure that we know all the facts, and that one fact more (as well as one fact less) may utterly change the aspect of things. There was a supposed law (I say a supposed law, because I do not need, for my purpose, to try the question of its validity) of political economy, about which a terrible outcry was once made on account of the consequences which would—inevitably,

it was said—follow from its application. All the facts *that were known* were taken into account, and all the arguments were fairly dealt with. The conclusion seemed irresistible. But, all the while, there were *facts remaining to be known* in the science of biology; and from these facts, which are now verified, a law is clearly inferred which balances the other. So the outcry was premature. Now, the biological law to which I refer—although it has here and there been instinctively acted upon for ages, and all over the world—is not known, probably, to more than one person in twenty thousand, if to so many. Supposing, then, that the odd one man guides himself by the law, what sort of justice is he likely to get out of the nineteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine? “Oh,” you say, “this is an imaginary case.” But, indeed, it is not. I speak with an instance in my own personal knowledge, in which a public man, standing high in religious society both for intellect and character, had to live down, some years ago, an infamous scandal for which there was no foundation whatever, and which arose simply because he knew of a Divine law more than his slanderers, and applied it.

A case like this involves both the ignorance and the poverty of imagination of which I spoke. What we

ought to think, in all difficult cases in which we are called upon to endeavour to understand others is this : —“ I know all these facts, but it is conceivable that there may be other facts which, if I knew them, would vary my apprehension of what is intended to be conveyed either by these deeds, or these words, or both.” We should try and think dramatically. It is not enough for justice that we place ourselves in the position of our friend or our enemy before we translate him. We should, first of all, try and turn ourselves *into him*. Having done that, we should then, by another effort, look at ourselves from his point of view. All this seems very obvious, yet we do not habitually heed it. If we were to hear that Johnson and Thompson had differed and dissolved partnership, our first impulse would be to wonder which was in fault. Yet how full of difficulty and danger are even carefully-considered cases ! The symptoms of apoplexy and the symptoms of drunken apathy are alike ; but there is a symptom the more in one of the two cases. We forget the possibility, and the man dies through our maltreatment. So it is in a million stories of daily existence, whether the interests at stake are great or small. We know “ the facts,”—all but one, the possibility of which we had never contemplated. But there are always new

facts to be known, and the best-considered "practical" conclusion may be upset to-morrow. "Then," you say, "what certainty is there?" Here is the answer:—None whatever, *in your sense*. Every inch of life is volcanic. Truth has always a new trick to show you. The moral is—Think from hand to mouth. That is wisdom and humbleness. The contrary is folly and conceit.

Before the ink of these paragraphs is fairly dry, a striking instance occurs, in my own experience, of the possibilities of error from imperfect intelligence, or rather from inactivity of the imagination. I apologise to my medical man for not seeing him the other day when he called, by saying, "At the moment when you knocked at the door, I was in the middle of a bath." He replies, with honourable candour and entire good-humour, "Come now, that's a good one! why, I heard you playing on the fiddle!"

Now, is not that a plausible case of White Lie on the poor patient's part? What conceivable hypothesis can reconcile the facts? A very simple one, which is simple truth. The patient occasionally took a *double* bath,—*i.e.*, a bath at, say, ten o'clock,—then, with an interval of fifteen minutes, another bath at a quarter-past ten. He was taking such a bath when the doctor

rapped at the door, just in the interval, which interval the patient was beguiling with his violin !

Now, the doctor was not bound to know that mystery of the double bath, and the case was of so little moment, that it was not worth his while to get imaginative over it. But let it be remembered that there *are* cases of awful moment, in the struggles of life, in which the difficulty of reconciling "facts" may be just as great, and the solution just as simple.

There is the illustration—there is my comment ; but I am tempted to strike them out,—I am tempted to throw the whole sheet into the fire,—so strong is my impression of the inutility of all expostulation of the kind,—of the hopelessness of inducing the ordinary mortal to hold his mind in suspense, and form no opinion at all, so long as there is the least risk of forming an unjust one.

A full and detailed recollection is a frequent source of blundering in active life, when it has to measure itself, for practical purposes, against memories of the ordinary character. For a great many years, I used to fancy people all remembered things as well as I did, and was accustomed, in discussions of personal matters, to proceed upon the supposition. But the fact is, the mass of mankind have only general remembrances of

things that took place, and have no patience with views which are based upon vivid and detailed recollections of the past. If you were once useful to a man, he probably keeps a broad, vague register of it in his mind, and thinks pleasantly of you. If your relations with him were ever unpleasant, (no matter where the fault lay, if fault there was,) he, probably, remembers that in the same vague way, and doesn't want to see you or talk to you. Well, it took me ever so long to find this out. I used to discuss the past with people upon the theory that they recalled things as fully and minutely as my own memory enabled me to do. Now, this always ended in a squabble, and in their taking a dislike to me. At last, it dawned upon me that mankind has a memory which lumps things up together. Your neighbour remembers the past pretty much as he sees the present—of course he does, what else can he do?—and you will only get up misunderstandings and despairs, if you endeavour to make him discriminate in the use of his memory.

I have not touched, except in remote hints, the subject of intellectual differences, and imperfections in mere logic as sources of misunderstanding: it is far too wide to be discussed here. I will only add that

we are bound to be grateful that that *illusion* of a true mutual understanding under which most people exist serves even so well as it does the purposes for which we are put in the world. This thought may well rebuke too impatient an analysis of the material of life. The great scheme works to its issues by using our blindness as well as our seeing—our dulness not less than our intelligence.

VI.

THE WEIGHING OF THE PIG.

THERE was once an Irishman, who said, when the hope and pride of the household was about to be sold, "My pig doesn't weigh as much as I expected: I always thought it wouldn't." This is really a very significant bit of puzzleheadedness.

So far as correctness goes, the Irishman had a glaring advantage over you and me in trying to weigh up moral gains and losses; because, in the first place, his pig was weighed for him and not by him; and, in the second place, the resources of arithmetic and the symbols of avoirdupois weight furnish the means of stating results with exactitude. But correctness is not the most influential thing going; and neither poetry nor homiletics would be bettered as a spiritual agency if it were possible to speak of nineteen stone of anticipation, or a hundredweight and a half of remorse. What vague ideas miss in point they often gain in power; and it is not new to remark that, even in arithmetic,

the most affecting quantity is that in which the last of the ciphers is too far off to be seen by the integer.

The peculiar significance of what the Irishman said lies in this—that his blundering phraseology really gives crude expression to the double consciousness with which we sometimes set about our little enterprises, or receive those incidents of our lot that come to us without our intentionally soliciting them. “Double consciousness” is, of course, only accommodated language; the real state of mind of a person who has doubts scribbled on his hopes, or cross-readings of hope cheerfully puzzling his fears, is one of oscillation so rapid that the interval of traversing the arc goes for nothing. It may be the same external circumstances that originate both the ruling estimate and the occasional subtractions from it; just as the heat of one fire may bring out lines written in sympathetic ink all across each other; but a man cannot think two things at once, any more than he can read at once both the straight and the diagonal lines in a letter. What he *can* do when he has become aware of the cross-writing is to remember that it exists, and turn to it now and then for the purpose of anticipating experience, so far as that is possible. The Irishman’s course was a very simple one. If he felt quite sure, while fattening his pig, that the ultimatum

he had set up in his expectations was beyond any conceivable limit of porciculture, he should have lowered his figure. If he thought the porcicultural horizon was a receding one, he should have increased his industry and his care. But no such obvious criticism applies to those complex situations in life in which we are apt to anticipate (let us preserve the bull) that things will not turn out as we expected. Not only is it the case that some shields have two sides, and the choice must be made whilst only one is turned to us; but things, good all round, have various values according to the mediums in which we are compelled to avail ourselves of them. The impatient simplicity of elder fable got rid (for didactic purposes at least) of the first difficulty by plunging into paradox. We all know how the astute Venetian won Portia to wife; and his plan would be a good one, if the game of life were, to our knowledge, a piece of playful thimblerrigging. But the fact, fatal to the paradoxes of pundits, is, that life, with serious, and even awful appearances of being a game of skill, present surprises which look like chance—or, in our saddest moments, even worse. “What is the good of my throwing,” says the poor, hard heart, “if the Other plays with loaded dice?” And what, in naked truth, what is that second difficulty but a load-

ing of the dice? How can I foresee the medium in which, five years hence, I shall be called upon to make rightness and content out of a thing which, in this actual present atmosphere, I now choose with all my heart and all my conscience? If it be, indeed, true that

“ There’s something flows to us in life,
But *more* is taken quite away,”

how can it be but that my pig must always prove short weight?

To the suggestion about the loaded dice there are three answers. In March 1856 an anonymous essayist, for whose sayings the present writer has a strong, though not surprising, memory, said, in downright fun, “ The world’s psychological statist has yet to be born : *when* he appears and makes out his tables, we shall find ourselves in possession of data for calculating a man’s life-battle beforehand, as easily as we can now calculate an occultation or an eclipse.” In the first volume of the late Mr Buckle the same idea will be found in a much more developed shape ; and if it were realised there would be nothing to wish for but an Act of Indemnity, with retrospective powers applying to those who had got themselves into puzzles by miscal-

culatation in moral porciculture *before* the appearance of the Norwich tables of psychology. So much for one answer.

Another reply is, that the dice *are* loaded, and all I have got to do is to submit; I cannot help myself; it is the Awful Will; and so on. This, one need not say, is the answer of Demogorgon, in "Prometheus Unbound,"—"He reigns,"—and inevitably prompts the question that follows it in the poem, "*Who* reigns?" If I am everywhere to be met with the

" Arch-device
Of giving men blind hopes to spice
The feast of life with—"

if, in fact, I am really assured that the dice used against me *are* loaded, I can at least borrow so much of old Ethnic daring as to say, "Then I will play no longer." To that, I am told, the "Universe" makes reply, "*Il n'y a pas d'homme necessaire.*" One has read that, and the like of it, in Mr Carlyle, and others, a hundred times; and very comfortable reading it is for a *pauvre honteux* in pig-wisdom. But it may be flung in one's eyes till they strike the spark of a hopeful doubt. The trodden worm will turn, and especially when he has sense enough to see that the question is

being begged. So up springs the *pauvre honteux* in a sacred rage, saying, I *must* submit to the game on your terms, must I? But I will try first. If I am not indispensable to you, neither are you to me, and so I raise the cry of "*Il n'y a pas d'univers necessaire!*"

The truth is, the teaching of Mr Carlyle is contradictory upon this little matter. He has given us, taking for that purpose the name of "Pilpay Junior,"* four fables, one of which is briefly this:—A hen becomes possessed with an exaggerated idea of her own consequence. "It is I that support this household, for its master is dyspeptical, and would die if I did not lay him his eggs for breakfast. Yet that poodle-dog, that does nothing, receives better treatment, and is much more honoured. By the cock of Minerva, they shall give me a double portion of oats, or they have eaten their last egg." The servants, however, will not give the poor silly creature a single extra grain. She croaks and frets and cackles, and gains nothing by it. So she takes, at last, to hiding her eggs out of sight. This is a fine revenge; but the end of it is that, after being tolerated for a week, she gets her neck wrung.

Of this melancholy story, Carlyle thus pronounces

* Miscellanies, vol. ii.

the moral:—"Man! why frettest thou, and whinest thou? This blockhead is happier than thou, and still a blockhead. Ah, sure enough, thy wages are too low! Wilt thou strike work with Providence, then, and force Him to an alternative? Believe it, He will do without thee: *il n'y a point d'homme necessaire.*"

To this I have just made the *pauvre honteux* reply, in a sacred rage, "*il n'y a pas d'univers necessaire*;" and I contend that one epigram is as good as the other; not only in the nature of things, but in the writings of this magnificent Pilpay, whose Might is Right. Nobody that ever professed to teach his fellow-men has more persistently than he told us that the Universe is only a picture on the retina of the eye of Man. In the eighth chapter of book i., "Sartor Resartus," I find this passage:—

"So that this so solid-seeming World, after all, were but an air-image; our ME [the capitals are not mine] the only reality; and Nature, with its thousandfold production and destruction, but the reflex of our own inward Force."

Again, Lectures on Heroes (i.)—"Meditation has taught men, in all ages, that this world is after all but a show, a phenomenon or appearance, no real thing."

And, again, (ii.,) "This so solid-looking material World is, at bottom, in very deed, Nothing."

My *pauvre honteux*, then, is entitled to turn round, and demand, Which way will you have it? Choose; only you cannot have it both ways. Is it man that is not necessary to the universe, or the universe that is not necessary to man?

Well, the knot may soon be untied. Once *assume* that a thing must be black or white, and you may impale your opponent with either horn of your dilemma. But if he has the courage to deny your premiss, he escapes your conclusion.

If the Universe is mere Power, no man is "necessary" to it. But if the Universe is Power *and* Love, (or Justice, which is the same thing,) every man is necessary to it; *i.e.*, it cannot, and never will, dispense with the happiness of any portion of itself. If the word "happiness" be objected to, it is easy to substitute for it the word "well-being."

That the universe is nothing but a picture in the eye of a man, can have no practical meaning except that when *he* ends the universe ends—for *him*. Pilpay's fable will help us here. To the cackling hen, the universe was nothing but a picture at the bottom of her eye. But it continued, to her master, after

her eye was no longer capable of receiving the impression.

The morality of the case is as simple as the rest of it. If I have affirmed, in my own mind, of "Providence," that Providence is Unlimited Power and Unlimited Goodness, then it is useless to assure me, on any authority whatever, (suppose, for example, on the authority of an alleged message from Providence,) that Providence has done or will do that which, *if I had known it beforehand on other evidence*, would have prevented my affirming the power unlimited and the goodness unlimited.

It is, of course, open to me to alter or to reverse my first conclusion. I may now say, having made this fresh discovery,—that the Universe is a scheme of Pure Malignity,—only that would be contradicted by the fact that my own consciousness would condemn such a Universe, and my own consciousness is part of the Universe. Or, I may say, that the Universe is partly Malignant and partly Benignant.

In the first case, religion is not possible at all, and the whole of Duty lies in the word Resistance—to the forces of the Universe; in the second case, the only religion that is possible is a form of Manichæanism.

If the idea of resisting the forces of the Universe appears to any one totally absurd, I must trouble him to pause before he decides. What is it to set up a lightning-conductor, to hoist a storm-drum, to launch a life-boat, to tunnel Mount Cenis, to vaccinate for small-pox,—what is it to do either of these things, but to Resist the Forces of the Universe?

In simple truth, the meanest thing which exists is as necessary to the Universe as the Universe to it, and this turning of the tables really contains, if not the germ of religion, that without which religious faith cannot hold its own. A poor forlorn mother, weeping over her dead baby, cried, in her agony, “I can’t bear it, and I won’t.” “Well, ma’am,” said her minister, “what do you propose to do?” Now, not even mother’s love, added to galvanism, would have helped her so far as we know. But what then? If—let the awful hypothesis be admitted for a moment—if it was merely a case of loaded dice; if the thing she appealed against was mere power, was law—not beneficial, but simply strong—the mother was right in saying she would not submit, and events would ultimately have justified her by dethroning a rule which was always on the side of the big guns. In other words, the sentiment of resistance to power, simply as power, is the beginning of

conscience. And our *pauvre honteux*, sympathising with the bereaved mother for that hypothetic instant, feeling that a Universe which had nothing to say to unhappy misreckoners in porciculture, but that they could be dispensed with, might justly, and effectively too, be told in turn that *it* could be dispensed with also—our *pauvre honteux* feels, in the very core of his soul, that there is a third answer to be given to the doubt concerning the dice :—*All the dice used in the game are alike*. If those of the Other are loaded, so, says he, are mine. Whatever of cryptical might makes the game awful—call it beneficent law, or call it the good will of God—is as much on my side of it, as on the side I cannot wholly see. I can never lose my due. If, to go back to the first figure of speech, if any particular pig of mine weighs less than I expected, (and I always thought it would,) an equivalent for the subtraction in weight is posted to my account somewhere or other in some other shape.

In some shape; but do not let us blunder here. Do not let us, for example, be signing our names to that particular article of Cantworship which affirms that genius is sure of recognition, and honest labour of its reward, using those words to indicate large slices of praise and pudding. This glib falsehood is so abund-

antly contradicted in the lives of the benefactors of mankind, that the wonder is how people can dare to go on repeating it. In the enormous majority of cases genius and industry meet with just luck enough to encourage them, no more. Unless they can afford to be their own "exceeding great reward" then, let them despair. Despair is the lesson which is abundantly preached from those heart-breaking chapters, the lives of great inventors and *originators* of almost all kinds; unless the *oistros*—the sacred enthusiasm—be its own sufficient crown and fee. It should be so; it is so; and assuredly the lesson taught by history and biography is that, though everybody has a *chance*, the greater part of human effort finds no external recognition and meets no exceptional success. The whole analogy of "inanimate" nature confirms this. The *double entendre* of Cant says there is no waste in the universe; but that is true only in a sense which can bring no comfort to a struggling originator, unless the man be, like all men of true genius, consciously *devoted*. In the lower sense, there is as much "waste" of human brain as there is of the spawn of codfish, of which—as of star-*nebulae*, acorns, and flower-seeds—uncountable, unthinkable milliards of milliards may come to nothing every year.

But what then? Is the originator, or the patriot, to give up, because he cannot predict or measure the "success" which attends upon his work? Is insurgent Poland to drop the sword, because she sees no good reason to expect a victory, or because the force of the moral support of the good will not add up in the same column with the muster-roll of her armies? Heaven forbid! Oh, my brethren and sisters, let us keep our powder dry, but let us trust in God *first*! Let us still go on believing in the imponderables! The *most* valuable things, indeed, steadily refuse to be valued. "Love," says Shakespeare, in the most beautiful of his sonnets—

"Is the star of every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, *although* his height be taken,"—

as if, in matters of the right Olympian strain, to be susceptible of precise estimate were rather a slander than a commendation. And so, in real truth, it is. If it were always to be known *when* the gods would interfere for right against might, how should there be heroes or gods either? Life would be only knowing what o'clock it is, and Jove a mere periodic winder-up of the works. At present, however, hearts unbruised and uncorrupted cling to the faith in the value of moral

support, the reasonableness of which faith anybody may settle in his own mind by asking himself this short question :—" If I had to fight, and fail, would I rather do it without sympathy or with it, supposing I could not get ' material ' help ? " Or he may settle it another way. Nobody can tell what moral support may lead to. It is putting the cart before the horse, to talk as if a rifled 110-pounder that stands twenty rounds with a bursting charge at Shoeburyness were superior to an idea. Where was the 110-pounder before Sir William Armstrong invented it ? These facts of to-day are all of them, without exception, the mere thoughts of yesterday. When Pierre Leroux offered his article entitled "*Dieu*" to a Parisian editor, the editor replied, "*La question de Dieu manque d'actualité.*" For all that, however, the heart leaps up with a mighty painful joy when a stripling attacks a giant in the Name of Names :—" Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield ; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord God of Hosts, whom thou hast defied." And now and then the pebble hits, and the big bully falls now and then. And it is enough, it is *more* than enough, for faith and courage. *Te Deum laudamus !* The good cause, even when things look blackest and friends fly fast, can afford to

be magnanimous, and dismiss Enobarbus with benediction, and “bounty overplus :”—

“Go, Eros, send his treasure after : do it ;
Detain no jot, I charge thee : write to him
(I will subscribe) gentle adieus and greetings.”

Enobarbus will wish to-morrow that he had not changed camps. Generation after generation of insurgent Poles, or Italians, or what-not, may bleed and die, and seem to leave nothing to show for it all. But who are we that we should presume to judge how much expenditure of blood the keeping alive of an idea is worth? Again, you, my poor, struggling brother, may not be seeing of the travail of your soul yet; but, indeed and indeed, you shall. Faithful, dearly beloved, is He who has called you to this work of your hands, and Yea and Amen are His promises. “The path of duty is the way to glory,” says a poet who knows; and even if you should not succeed in getting the “glory,” the poet promises you something else, after you shall have scaled certain “toppling crags” of which he speaks :—

“The path of duty is the way to glory :
He that walks it, only thirsting
For the right, and learns to deaden

Love of self, before his journey closes,
 He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
 Into glossy purples, which outredden
 All voluptuous garden-roses.
 He, that ever following her commands,
 On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
 Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
 His path upward, and prevailed,
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
Are close upon the shining table-lands
To which our God himself is moon and sun."

If anybody thinks this a poor look-out, I might end with the words of Mr Affable Hawk to his daughter, "Sorry I can't do better for you, my dear!" but, brother, sister, I will add this—at the time I, who now hold the pen, write nearly all you are now reading, "toil of heart" in "the long gorge" was mine, so far beyond the common lot that my words may claim to have some weight with you. *Iddio non paga il Sabato*—God does not always pay on a Saturday; but He pays. Wait upon Him; and, when you have waited, wait.

It is a great thing to make up the mind that there are no illusions, and cannot possibly be any. The balance-sheet of the universe cannot be made up, unless the account of every soul in it is squared; so that the inexorability of arithmetic is on the side of every

name on the ledger, as well as on that of the ledger-keeper. While our little accounts are running, we may meet disappointments of various kinds; some through other people's faults, some through our own. We may, and constantly do, in the pursuit of an object, discount the future in our eagerness, and forget the fact when the time of realisation comes. We grudge what may be vicarious suffering or deprivation, forgetting how much others may be having for our sakes. In a thousand ways we show the arrogance of short-sighted men in judging of our friend's pig as well as of our own when brought to market. We are almost incredibly apt to overlook the fact that there are no available exact scales for these things. Nancy Cass, *née* Lammeter, says to her husband, "Nothing is so good as it seemed; even our marriage is not, you see." But how did Nancy know? When Lenette was on the point of dying out of the arms of her second husband, Stiefel, she asked the minister, "Shall I not rejoin my Firmian?" though she loved Stiefel and had not loved Firmian. And so on through countless stories of what is called illusion.

On these and similar commonplaces in human experience are founded moral teachings which are intended to supply, to those who are supposed to

be over-confident of their future, the place of the Irishman's sub-current of expectation. "Your pig," says Experience, the big-wig, "will not weigh as much as you expect, and you had better think it will not. Reflect how gray-haired sixty will look back upon brown-haired thirty. The hard-faced world will ring your fairy gold on its counters and call you a smasher—if it does not turn to slates before you offer it." And very good talk this is, and useful; but it can never be held conclusive. Why is sixty nearer the truth than thirty? Why should the first-taken view of a subject be always held liable to correction by the second taken, when there has been a change of place, or of atmosphere? Who knows, who can possibly know, the compensations which may exist in results which seem to turn out ever so fatally. No doubt True Thomas got well pitied for his imprisonment in Fairyland, but it was surely something to acquire, even in that sojourn, "the lips that could not lie." All this pains, say we, in half-ignorance of another's world—all this pains

" For the sake
Of giving a Semitic guess,
Or playing pawns at blindfold chess."

The expenditure is too great for the product: of that we feel certain. Here is a man who

“Wears out his eyes
Slighting the stupid joys of sense,
In patient hope, that ten years hence
Somewhat completer he may see
His list of *lepidopterae*.”

And that *is* absurd, as he will feel when his eyesight is gone! Then he will say *we* were right. Well perhaps he may, and yet we may have been wrong. But it must not be forgotten that this sort of prophecy tends to fulfil itself. A man who waits too deferentially upon the doubts which pretend to check his expectations, may so permit them to assume a malign influence over his better stars, and have to reproach himself bitterly in the end :—

“Fool !
To let the chance slip, linger cool
When such adventure offered ! Just
A bridge to cross, a dwarf to thrust
Aside, a wicked mage to stab,
And, lo ye, I had kissed Queen Mab !”

If Godfrey Cass, now, had cultivated a bolder philosophy of life, and known how to cross a bridge, when the running water that would have cut off the pursuit

of his fate lay before him, what a different lot his might have been !

There was once a little child, who has since grown up to fill the present page of print among other more or less useful and useless things, and who was accustomed to resent the *ex post facto* wisdom of his seniors in a manner which puzzled the unmetaphysical among them. "There now!" one would say to him, "it has come on to rain; ain't you glad I didn't let you go out?" To this or like questions he used to reply, to the frequent aggravation of his good friends, "No, I'm not; how can I tell what it would have done if I *had* gone out?" or in that vein, according to the circumstances. And in soberest truth, one learns to temper one's apprehensions of danger with doubts of its magnitude when it comes. Our troubles are not as great as we expected, and we always thought they would not be. There are, in life, such enormous reserves of the unexpectable; and just when the turn the game is taking suggests that the dice are loaded, a clear vision might often show us that, at least, they are loaded all round. "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, behold an host compassed the city walls with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, 'Alas, my master! how shall

we do?’ And he answered, ‘Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be against us.’ And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘Lord, I pray thee, open thou his eyes, that he may see.’ And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw and beheld the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” A humbler illustration is to be found in a well-known fable of Lessing’s:—A traveller on the bank of a broad river starts to see a panther spring out of a jungle on the other side. Just as he gives himself up for lost, a crocodile makes his appearance in the opposite direction. Now, if ever mortal man was doomed, he surely was—crocodile, panther, river! Yet, who does not know the happy sequel? The panther, in the hurry of his leap, fell into the jaws of the crocodile, and the traveller went on his way rejoicing; and, doubtless, meditating. Of course, this is only an illustration; a man who is sued simultaneously by his baker and his butcher, must not suppose this essay is written to encourage him to hope that his baker will fall into the jaws of his butcher. But things quite as extraordinary do happen in one’s external history; and things even more extraordinary in one’s inner life.

Of all the wonderful things that experience and

inevitable introspection reveal to a man, none are so utterly and past description wonderful as the transformations and resolutions of moral material which take place in the mysterious alembic of the soul. The pain one gives, and the pain one receives, the results of the wear and tear of emotion and will, in the midst of the chopping and changing that go on throughout all the complex vicariousness of life; the pleasure one takes, and the pleasure one communicates—the blindness and the seeing, the hitting in the dark, and the withholding too—how all this is digested into life, and the pig goes on weighing more than we expected, although we always thought it would not! Thinking on these things, in the intense quiet of a subdued but not cowardly heart, one cannot help feeling that, as the themes of life are repeated in higher forms, on the ascending spiral, the common phraseology of moral criticism must undergo successive translations too. It seems idle to say that in moods of humble but lofty affection, such words as praise, blame, injury, pardon, are found utterly inadequate for the ideas against which they stand—so enlarged do the ideas become. And yet any attempt to be more specific would lend itself too easily to the ridicule of minds which remain inductile even in the white heat of intense meditation.

Let us wind up with the Ever Inexplicable Pig, yours or mine—yours *and* mine—which never weighs the exact thing it was expected to weigh, in spite of a sub-current of expectation that ought to have kept the result and the anticipation on the square. He would be thought an ungainly humourist who should say to (suppose) a friend whom, in some unavoidable conflict of lots or divergence of paths, he had unwillingly put to pain—"Brother, life cannot proceed without a good deal of moral going on trust; and, at some point on our Ascending Spirals, we shall meet and square accounts." Never mind Spirals! Better to turn the spiral downwards, and, applying it in the shape of a cork-screw to the wine of the present, drink to the approximate adjustment of weights realised and weights expected in psychological porciculture. Brother, Sister, no heel-taps: Here's your Pig! And my Pig! And all good Christians', I pray Heaven!

VII.

SELF-LOVE.

ALL the talk about Self-love is a curious illustration of the abuse of metaphor. The figure is, in fact, an inversion, a turning upside down of the truth ; and nothing else. The wonder is that anybody could ever be misled by it.

Briefly, there is no such thing as self-love ; there cannot be. You might as well talk of self-lifting. When a man has contrived to see the images on the retina of his own eye, he may begin to speak of self-love, (otherwise than by poetic licence.) In plain, simple fact, a man loves somebody else, and then, by a figure of speech, because he is kind to the person he loves, begins to speak of loving himself. But who can get outside his own identity, and form an attachment to it ?

The whole history of philosophy contains nothing more fantastic than the use which has been made of this metaphoric phrase, self-love. First, the very idea

of love is fetched out of the realm of disinterested capacity; then it is,—while the eye yet sees its essence,—made up into a metaphoric phrase; and, lastly, the figure of speech is, by a mere conjuring trick, made use of to discredit its own origin. It is precisely as if a man's photograph were to step out of its frame and deny the existence of the man. It is because human nature can and does love something external to itself that it is denied the power of loving anything *but* itself.

This kind of criticism can, of course, address itself logically to those only whose confusion upon the main question is purely intellectual. No argument can touch those who deny the facts upon which the metaphor is founded. That is a question of experience. If a person says, "I do not see the moon,"—or, "The moon is green in colour and triangular in form," it may be fair for the remainder of the human race to reply, "You are blind, or afflicted with Daltonism;" but it is useless to argue the question of fact.

Let no one think I am going to ride off upon this by-path. We will come to close quarters in a moment, and endeavour to ascertain exactly what are the facts which *can* be agreed upon.

I presume nobody will care to consult idiots upon the point? Let Science choose its own definition of an idiot,—a being nominally human, with a brain less than sixteen inches in circumference. The idiot is excluded, is he, from the jury empannelled to try the question of fact? Very good. But if the intellectual imbecile is to be shut out, why not the moral imbecile? Do not take alarm—I shall not ask much; and shall take no unfair advantage. We must have *some* datum-line of emotion as well as of perception, you will admit; and we need not be exacting. Have you, by accident, a faithful dog? Shall the low-water mark, the point of sight, or whatever we call it, be fixed somewhere about the level at which Llewellyn's hound may lie bleeding beside the cradle of his master's child?

Perhaps that would be quite enough for the most rigid logic, but the question is, what we shall *exclude*.

There was a handsome, healthy Swiss, of the age of about nineteen, executed in London some years ago, amidst a very unusual storm of public execration. He was not without money; but, having entered into casual relations with a poor, defenceless girl, he coldly, cruelly strangled her at daybreak *for a small Dutch clock*, and made off with his prize, leaving her stone-dead on the pillow. This man was caught, tried, and sen-

tenced. He showed no sign whatever, not the slightest, of compunction for what he had done ; but he did show the most abject fear of death. Was not he a moral idiot ? Surely he cannot form one of our jury to try the facts ?

Again let us guard ourselves. This man's experience is itself a fact, which must be taken *quantum valeat*, and find its place—*somewhere*. Accordingly, it need not be forgotten. But here, probably, we may venture to show it the door. Let it wait. Our twelve men shall be, with your consent, average human creatures ; and they shall get their testimony for analysis from history, biography, the newspaper of to-day, the household story which is scarcely cold, scarcely done, scarcely memory.

The only question is, whether or not the judge should stop the cause on a preliminary objection. It seems rather absurd to inquire, formally, into the existence of such a thing as disinterestedness—which is, apparently, admitted by the terms of the question, and by the attitude of the parties. By the terms of the question,—for where did anybody find his idea of that which is not ? A man may think a golden lion, if he have, to begin with, the idea *gold*, and the idea lion,—but decidedly not otherwise. And by the attitude of

the parties,—for what has either of them to gain by the suit, except that which one of the combatants positively declares, beforehand, to be a husk without a kernel?

Perhaps an objection is raised, *in limine*, on the other side, that the word *moral* has been unduly imported into the question,—that the mere possibility of morals is the very thing in dispute. No: that objection comes from some *amicus curiæ*; it does not lie in the mouth of the other side to raise it, perhaps? But, at all events, the objection has to be overruled. I beg no question whatever. I use the word *moral* provisionally only,—without maintaining that any precise line can be drawn between intellect and emotion,—just to indicate that portion of our nature which we all agree must be regulated, either from within or from without. I assume absolutely nothing, and you may make any deduction you like from the foregoing phraseology; for enough will remain when you have done your worst.

Now, then, for the facts. The average human being experiences a desire to obtain positive pleasure for himself, and also to relieve himself from pain. But he also experiences, with more or less frequency and more or less intensity, a desire to cause pleasure to others

and to relieve *them* from pain. Sometimes the desire in question is connected (and strengthened by the connexion) with some positive personal affection ; sometimes not. In a few rare cases the impulse is seen to rise to a height which man agree to call heroic ; but everybody knows something of it, and the child, as soon as ever he can read, finds it set down in his lesson-book, that to do good to others without regard to consequences to himself is both a happy and a beautiful thing. Round the extreme cases of (what is called) self-sacrifice, the faith and admiration of the race appear to group themselves in countless forms of homage, as if conscious that there, or nowhere, the worth-while, the *raison d'être* of its whole story is vindicated in the triumph over pain of something which is stronger than pain.

Let not the reader grow impatient of the simplicity of the process by which it is sought to enclose the difficulties of the subject within a very simple boundary-line ; for he will find that nothing is to be overlooked that is essential to the argument.

It has been confidently asserted that there is, after all, a limit beyond which human love and human kind-

ness cannot be pressed upon by pain without breaking down. It may be so ; but nobody can positively affirm it, because, first, human nature is not constant, but varies in different specimens ; and secondly, there is no fixed measure of pain. I once told my little boy (of twelve) the story of the Russian mother who, to save her own life, flung out the babe to the wolves. His breast heaved ; his face glowed ; his eyes flashed,—and *he steadfastly refused to believe the story*. But suppose the story true,—we have then, on the one hand, a mother whose instinct is so weak as to lend plausibility to the assertion just referred to ; and, on the other hand, a mere child, (never “crammed” with sentiments or moralities,) in whom the special instinct of self-sacrifice, which is supposed to be characteristic of a mother, is so overpoweringly strong that he will not allow his mind steadily to conceive the defect of the other specimen. In the presence of such extremely wide variations, it certainly seems idle to assert that there is a limit beyond which human nature cannot go in bearing pain for love’s sake. The question of types need not be overlooked, but it must here be postponed. But the records of martyrdom and heroism are wide, are long, are practically endless ; and it is difficult to imagine greater torture inflicted than has,

in fact, been borne by men or by women, for love of individuals, or for love of Love.

Will anybody who does not admire the last clause set himself the gracious task of inventing some torture,—some modification of the thumb-screw, the “boots,” or the cap of silence,—which shall be warranted to make a man betray his friend, or a woman her baby, within so many minutes, or so many hours?

Let us suppose the whole scheme of things to have approached the moment when it must end, in order to begin again. Let the Author of the scheme (whose existence is a question which we will beg, for the sake of argument) say to A,—one of an even couple whose fates remain unsettled,—“The everlasting condition of B rests with you. If you consent to depart into endless pain, or to sink into endless nothingness, B shall live happy; but B will never know of the sacrifice you have made. Choose.” Is it conceivable that A would purchase the happiness of B at such a price? Some readers will at once say, Yes,—happy lovers, happy parents, for example; some will say, No; some will hesitate to express an opinion. The chief difficulty contained in the supposition is, by the by, that it is blasphemous, unless held in careful suspension by the

mind; for a being who could make such a proposal would be without goodness, and not to be trusted by A, promise whatever he might.

However, the mere fact that the case can be put without exciting derision,—the mere fact that any thoughtful person can feel a doubt whether human nature would or would not be capable of so much,—is pregnant with life. Let it stand,—*it*, the fact that the case can be seriously put,—let it stand in the stead of any attempt (which could hardly be less than futile) to exhibit, cumulatively, so as to impress the imagination, the possibility of that (so-called) disinterestedness in which mankind are more or less deliberate and conscious believers.

There is a fact which is within the personal experience of almost everybody,—certainly within the experience of everybody who is likely to be at the pains of following out the present discussion; the fact, namely, that the emotion which accompanies or follows the doing of good to others is the most exquisite of which the heart is capable; so exquisite that fresh, unworn souls are sometimes tempted to say, “I will have *no* pleasure *but* this;” so exquisite that the worn and travel-stained are overheard by their intimates to exclaim, in moments of greatest pain, “I will forsake these paths of mingled

effort for the narrow road of pure unmingled self-renunciation—my feet may bleed, but my head will touch the stars.”

If the happy lover, or the happy parent, should put in his word here, and say that he has a joy than which none *can* be greater—let him pause, for he must know, even in the hour of his most triumphant egotism, that his joy would be less if it would not blend with another’s.

What, now, have our jury to say to the facts they have been empannelled to try? It *is* true that no limit can be fixed to the human capacity for self-sacrifice at the bidding of personal or general good-will. It *is* true that human nature is conversant with no greater pleasure than that of communicating happiness.

But let us hear the other side.

On the very surface, it seems, lies the answer to all this. An act of self-sacrifice is still done because it is a pleasure; is still the product of self-love. The man who endures the rack rather than let his friend be caught by an enemy, does so because he would suffer more if his friend were caught than he now suffers in preventing the capture. He is still only choosing the greater pleasure and avoiding the greater pain.

This is, in brief, a summary of all that was ever said or written by the philosophers who reduce everything to (what is called) self-love. By a law of our nature called the law of sympathy, we take on, or *may* take on, what another feels, or might feel, so keenly that our own personal sensations may be flooded into comparative nothingness.

In other words—let us be quite sure we grasp our prey—men and women are capable (under, perhaps, exceptional conditions, or, in exceptional types,—if you, the adversary, insist upon that clause) of desiring the happiness of other men and women so much more strongly than their own, that the desire becomes a very powerful motive of action.

Now is not this admirable? Gentlemen of the jury, the adversary's logic is like the poor Russian who, having been driven about for years, fancying all the while he was in Siberia, or going to Siberia, was suddenly let out one fine morning, and found himself opposite his own door. Or like a man, who has been turning over head and heels so long that he is astonished, when a pause sets him square on his feet as usual, to feel himself vertical to the horizon. This, gentlemen of the jury, is what the logic comes to: it cannot come to more,—it cannot come to less: it is

mere word-play, and must remain so, till a man can make self-love from metaphor into fact,—can really and truly get outside his own identity and form an attachment to himself.

The lover, in Tennyson, said he would have hidden his mistress's needle in his heart to save her finger from a scratch.

“Never mind,” cries the adversary,—and here I quote words that have been actually used,—“your fair ostensibility of disinterested virtue grows out of the base mould of self-seeking.”

Well, how so?

“Why, by reason of the Law of Sympathy, which sometimes makes us feel the pain of another more than our own. See Adam Smith, *in loco*.”

My lord, and gentlemen of the jury, it pleases my learned friend to be jocose. I am content with his answer. If a mediæval sage had been asked why a loadstone drew steel towards it, he would have replied, “Because the loadstone hath in it a quality of attraction.” I tell my learned friend that human nature is capable of disinterested emotion; and he replies that the emotion is not disinterested because it proceeds from a Law of Sympathy!

This is just another way of saying that the man who

performs a disinterested action (so-called) does it because he is induced to do it by a motive of action which is, for the time, the strongest. *Or, in other words, that he does it because he chooses to do it.*

I defy human ingenuity to make anything else out of the argument of my learned friend. He must have got himself confused in adjusting the word "pleasure" to the purposes of this discussion. Here, again, a figure of speech has misled him. "Will it *please* your highness to have the blister on now?" does not imply that there is delight in vesication.

"Our pleasures," said Howard, "should give way to others' comforts; our comforts to their necessities; and our very necessities to their extremities." Now, a man who relinquished a necessity to succour a fellow-creature *in extremis*, would undoubtedly do it because he pleased to do it, and, though he died in the act, might be made happy by it; but that he would be seeking a pleasure in the sense in which he would be conferring one is obviously and absurdly false.

But again, suppose it not so. Grant all that my learned friend seems to require, *without* analysing his terms and showing that he demands what amounts to nothing,—grant it all, I say, and what then? Still, the *result* is zero, absolute nihility. For his law of selfish-

ness is universal: its action and reaction are equal all round the universe: and the most transcendental formula of the Disinterested School covers the facts as well as his, and contains just as much guidance. By his own confession that is so. His argument is, avowedly, a mere process of reduction. Well, I have shown you that his lowest term involves nothing new. I have taken the phoenix out of the ashes under your very eyes. It is the same bird. Of course it must be so. The argument of my learned friend can never come to anything but a game of head or tail. He shows you one side, and wants to persuade you that the money is bad. I turn the obverse side upwards, and ask, Is it not the same coin—solid gold, with a legend you never happened to look at before?

VIII.

TRUTH AND HONOUR.*

THERE is an absolute distinction to be drawn between Truthfulness and Honour, and all the confusions into which men get themselves about white lies and black lies, and broken pledges, depend upon the omission of that distinction from the argument. *Honour* is personal, and may positively conflict with *Truthfulness*. If it do, it must give way, being the less. For, unless we can make out a basis of Veracity for the *whole* of life, no particular portion of it has any rationale whatever.

Let us endeavour briefly to think this out by a little honest casuistry, or putting of cases,—first, with reference to the “lie” question; and secondly, the question of promiser and promisee.

* I find, from my scrutiny of the papers of Mr Holbeach, that these passages were written before the Newman-Kingsley controversy began.—Ed.

If one of the early Christians had been forbidden by the Romans, who would not listen to him, to preach Christ in the streets of Rome, would it be right of him to meet his fellow-Christians, or others not unwilling, in a secret chamber, and there preach Christ ?

The answer is, Yes.

But if the Roman surprises the Christian in his secret chamber, and demands of him if he worships Christ, may the Christian deny the fact ?

The answer is, No.

What, however, is the rationale of this difference ?

If the Christian, as a private individual, were preaching Christ to a Roman as a private individual, and the Roman were to say, "Desist ; I will have none of your preaching,"—the Christian would be morally bound to leave off, for the same reason that he would be morally bound (for instance) to leave off telling the Roman an unwelcome or unpleasant story.

But if the Christian, speaking of Christianity to a willing third person, is forbidden by the Roman, a new case immediately arises. The Roman has now infringed the first principle of morals, ("every man may do all that he will, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man,") and the Christian

may, *in order to restore the equilibrium of the situation, do anything whatever that does not infringe that same principle.* In other words, he may do anything whatever that will place him in the same position, (or as near as he can get to it,) as if the Roman had not interfered.

What, then, is it which the Christian must *not* do or say?

He must not do or say that which denies the nature of anything to be precisely what it is. The Roman has trespassed upon his freedom to do a given thing. If he can change the physical conditions of the case, without applying to the Roman more compulsion than the Roman has applied to him, he may justly do so ; much more, without applying to the Roman any compulsion at all.

Now, the hypothesis of the application of force on one side is a resisting will on the other side. Whatever can be covered by the very extremest generalisation into which that assumption may be thrown is, *possibly*, right. But whatever travels beyond the hypothesis of a resisting will is, *certainly*, wrong.

Let us suppose the Roman to be taking aim with an arrow at the Christian. Clearly the Christian is en-

titled to take shelter behind a tree, when he sees or foresees the arrow coming.

This is within the hypothesis of a resisting will.

Again : The Christian is entitled, if he can, to *dodge* the arrow : he may make a feint of hiding behind the palm-tree, when his real intention is to hide behind the fig-tree.

This is within the hypothesis of a resisting will.

Again : If the Roman is in pursuit of the Christian, the Christian may, if he is able, put the Roman upon a false scent, by creating an artificial track ; as, for example, by dropping beads off an amulet which the Roman supposes him to carry in his flight.

This is within the hypothesis of a resisting will.

But, if the Roman knocks at the door of the Christian, may the Christian tell Rhoda the damsel to deny that he is there ?

Perhaps he may, perhaps he may not : it is a question of circumstances,—the answer still turning on the principle of the *hypothesis of a resisting will*.

Lastly : When the Roman, having seized the Christian, demands if he worships Christ to-day as he did when attacked in the Roman street, may the Christian deny the fact ?

The answer, already given, is, No.

And the reason is, that such an answer does *not* lie within the hypothesis of a resisting will.

Here we will pause, for we are brought face to face with the last analysis of the Idea of Duty, of which something will be said elsewhere ; but in the meanwhile we will proceed to consider the case of promiser and promisee.

In this relation the distinction between Truthfulness and Honour may be illustrated in another way. There is a story which, in one or other of its current shapes, has been turned into plays, novels, and even into poems. Usually it is an actress or an actor who is the chief personage ; but the narrative may be essentially the same, without that peculiarity. Let us suppose him to be an actor. He has fallen in love with an innocent maiden who has seen him act. The poor girl, full of faith and simplicity, has fallen in love with him also. The girl's father goes to the actor, tells him his daughter loves him ; explains that it is, in the paternal mind, desirable that she should be united, or rather subjected, to a man whom she does *not* love, and earnestly begs the actor to get out of her way. Without a moment's parley, the actor enters into a compact with the father, for the purpose of destroying the

daughter's love for himself. Invited to meet the maiden, he discovers that it is she with whom *he* is in love ! However, nothing staggers him. He keeps his promise to the father, being, as he says, "on his honour." So he pretends to be a drunkard, a gambler, and a lewd degraded wretch ; misbehaves himself indeed so brutally that this innocent young creature scorns and dismisses him. When he is gone, the father tells his poor disenchanted child that he had *paid* this man of honour to come and amuse the company after an actor's fashion. And she then consents, with a sick, sad heart, to be married—that is, chained up—to the man she does not love ; who is known to the father for a real drunkard, gambler, and rake. The actor earnestly advises her, in the interest of filial virtue, to obey her father, and be subjected to the two-legged brute for life. In the end, this shocking catastrophe is averted, and the two lovers are made happy.

Now, a dramatist is not a moralist. If he presents us with a good story, and teaches nothing wrong, he does all we may demand of him. The same thing applies to the novelist or the poet who treats an incident. So that I do not quote the conception for the purpose of condemning any use that has been made of it, in books or on the stage, but simply to illustrate

the distinction between Truthfulness and Honour. I say nothing of the error of supposing (error of mere barbarism) that a woman is like an apple, to be eaten, or a glass of wine, to be drunk ; a creature who can, at will, be a wife, without entire emotional consent, (which, however, is false, both in physics and in metaphysics.) I pass over the fact that though a father may, conceivably, have a right to say, "No, you shall not!" it is highly indecent for the man who loves a woman to urge upon her an act of falsehood and self-degradation. I leave alone the coarse and misleading notion of the uninstructed mind in general, that love is mere inclination, like a desire for a cake or a sovereign,—it being, on the contrary, vital, and moral in its very essence. All that may pass. But how is it that only a very few seem to discern that the conduct of the lover and the father was simply false and wicked? that no "honour" could possibly bind any lover to a compact infamous in itself, to say nothing of its having been entered into in ignorance of one most important fact—namely, the identity of the maiden? Not only was it in itself a moral offence of the very gravest kind for the lover to go and pretend to be a bad man; it was also a base and cruel injury inflicted upon the maiden, striking at the very roots of faith and trust by destroy-

ing her belief in the sincerity of a man whom she supposed to be all that he appeared. In the first place, it was untruthful (as well as unmanly) to make such a promise as the lover made to the father. In the second, he was sacredly bound to break it, all the "honour" in the world notwithstanding. For when personal honour conflicts with truthfulness, the formal engagement must go to the wall. In vain will you preach that this may be abused to vile uses. No doubt. But you cannot make a stream ascend above its fountain. It can be shown (though the showing be scarcely needful) that the last analysis of Duty is veracity, or *conformity to the total truth of things*. No promise can be justly given except upon the basis that it is instrumentally helpful to the realisation in conduct of such conformity. Thus there is in every promise an implicit clause to the effect that if it should ever conflict with the higher duty, it must be held voidable. It cannot survive the death of the reason for which it was given. With perfect moral rectitude, therefore, Maggie Tulliver, having promised her brother Tom to see Philip no more, goes to Tom, when new facts arise, and demands to be released from her promise. This shows a clear appreciation of the *differentia* now pointed out, but it is very seldom discerned even obscurely.

Lest this teaching should be perverted, or misrepresented, (and there is danger of perversion, since human beings are so imperfect,) let it be understood that in considering the new state of facts, the consequences to the promisee of having acted upon the promise must form an important element.* The promisee may have rights of the most momentous kind, founded upon the promise; and such rights, if any, or if uncanceled by conduct of his own, must enter into the question of the real truth of things at the moment when, on the plea of veracity, the promiser demands release. But that point does not arise in a case like that of the story before us, in which the promisee, when the promise is broken, stands only just where he did before it was extracted from the promiser.

Breaches of that elementary and obvious veracity of the tongue or pen, which is the important symbol of the higher veracity, to which it may have, from time to time, to be adjusted, are so severely punished by

* It was perhaps scarcely necessary for Mr Holbeach to guard himself in this place. It is a commonplace of ethics, perfectly well understood, frequently stated, and always implied, that the obligation of a promise may be superseded by an obligation which is higher. But see Appendix.—ED.

the social consequences, that it is not in that direction that the greatest danger lies. Few people care to incur the penalties which wait upon open breaches of honesty and good faith; but there are no social penalties threatening untruthfulness, (nor should there, nor can there be any,) and thus life is "honeycombed with uncertainty," and mined by dumb, dull regrets, which stand in ridiculous contrast with the external machinery that pretends to be going so smoothly. Uncertainty and regrets, which only self-denying truthfulness can banish! It is better to have good, honest suffering, however severe, along with that faith in the truth of things which only the true can feel, than to have the heart cankered with scepticism by a life of "honourable" pretence.

IX.

THE MOUNTAINS AND THEIR SHADOWS.

I FIND in the writings of an acute and unflinching thinker—of the purely academic school however, and totally wanting in dramatic insight—some very awful passages about what Mr Carlyle calls the “Terrible Method, not yet extinct in the Universe.” Here is one of them, in form a criticism upon another writer,—equally acute, and equally wanting in dramatic vision,—but, in substance, the assertion of a theory of things which I reject :—

“I certainly know of no other man who has stood so unabashed in the front of these awful forms. One almost envies him the truly childlike faith with which he waves his hand to these Alps, and says: Be thou removed, and cast into the sea! But the feeling is exchanged for another when he seems to rub his eyes, and exclaim: Presto! they are gone, sure enough!—while you still feel that you stand far within the circumference of their awful shadows.”

A more unhappy passage was, surely, never written by any apologist, of any school, for any form of positive faith. By no manner of ingenuity can this sort of talk be applied as an argument in favour of Christianity. It is an argument which makes religion impossible.

No human being ever denied, categorically and without reserve, the existence of the mountains with their awful shadows. The mountains *are*, and their shadow has lain, lies, must lie, on every human soul at times. But the question is, What *are* the mountains? or, What are the mountains for? Or, again, What shall we live by,—the Shadows, or the Light, that, falling on the mountains, *makes* the shadows? So long as I remain in the shadow, religion is not possible to me,—unless belief in a good god *and* a bad god may be called religion. The moment I step into the light, however, religion, for me personally, has begun. For any man to confess that he still stands “*within the circumference* of the awful shadows” of Evil, is to confess that he does not worship. That he *submits* is quite another thing.

The case may be re-stated, even to weariness, in a

hundred thousand different ways; but here is one more attempt.

I look around the world, and I see certain forms of evil which displease me. If I find suffering *in another*, I wish to remove it. If I find wrong-doing, I disapprove—my disapproval sometimes rising to the height of passionate indignation.

Now, of two things one :—The Maker of the world, and of my heart, sympathises with me in this desire to remove all evil, or He does not.

If the Maker of the world does not sympathise with my hatred of evil, and my will to make it cease,—I know my part. It is contained in a word,—Resistance,—*not* Religion. If this be so, I am, indeed, “far within the circumference” of the dark cones—but I see the light, and am not, perhaps, without hope. A terrible *perhaps*!

Now for the other side of the dilemma.

If the Maker of the world hates evil, as I do, and has (in kind) the same will to remove it, then I pass, at one bound, from *out of* the “shadow.” For, be-think you. *My* will to remove evil is boundless—*i.e.*, there is *no* evil that I would choose to let stand; and, by the same rule that I know my own existence, I know that that will be so for ever,—that I shall never

(if I live to all eternity) cease to desire the extirpation of evil. I cannot fulfil my desire, *except in part*; simply because I have only an imperfect control of the tendency of things. But the Maker of all that is must have a perfect control of that tendency; in other words, it is His will that there should be no evil.

Here, however, comes my sceptic, and tells me to go back into the dark again. Says he, The mystery of Evil *is*. The Evil exists. Why not for ever?

Answer :—Because it is, by the hypothesis, part of the definition of Evil that it is a thing TO BE REMOVED. There is no other meaning in the word. Unless Wrong be evanescent there is no Right to be worshipped.

It is needless to go round the circle again. I, myself, do absolutely will the removal of whatever is evil. The Being whom I worship (not merely fear) must will it also. Whatever I may not understand in His methods, then, I am clear about the result. Nothing that contradicts it, can I believe on any authority. It is useless to tell me that if the existence of Evil at this hour is not inconsistent with the hypothesis of God's goodness, so neither is its existence to all eternity. Nonsense! For Evil, as defined for the argument, is

(I repeat it) *a thing that is willed to cease*—a thing that is subject, not superior. Make it master, and you change your terms, at the same time destroying the possibility of religion,—except in some form which commences by supposing that one being made my head, and another being my headache.

Of course there will be times when the most devout mind will feel that it has lost its way again into the “shadows ;” but then it is, *for* the time, undevout. Religion is submission ; but that is not all : it is submission with homage. Submission, with fear (only),—submission to power, simply *as* power, is nothing but superstitious baseness.

Let us see if we cannot make the case still plainer by instancing, as parallel, the position taken up by the Hobbist or political absolutist. The absurdity of that position lies in making the stream ascend above its source—in setting authority above the final cause, or *ratio*, of authority. Of course we begin the argument in our own minds by making a *tabula rasa* of the world politic or social ; by supposing no law, no lawgiver, no moral code,—no, not the crudest. So far we are agreed. You, the Hobbist or political absolutist, (whom for the moment I will address exclusively,) then say that this

community of human beasts would tear each other in pieces if no authority intervened to make everybody relinquish something of his right to everything.

I might here (if it were not beside the question) interrupt the argument by suggesting that at this stage of your retrospect you admit by implication what you afterwards deny—namely, the existence of a moral sense—*i.e.*, the germ of an absolute morality. For *why* should your wild beasts *not* tear each other in pieces? You, the spectator A, suppose B and C to be destroying each other, and you disapprove. So you invoke Authority to separate B and C. But the question is, *Why* do you disapprove? “It is an ultimate fact.” Yes, indeed, it *is* an ultimate fact, reduce it to whatever terms you please; and it is the absolute to which the remainder of your scheme must be relative. *Some* absolute, however, there must be: you can never get to zero, travel backwards (from any possible existing moral polity) as far as you may.

However, let us proceed with you on your own hypothesis. There must needs be, you say, some authority, and it is indifferent, you add, (which, by the way, I dispute,* but that may stand over,) whether it asserts

* By the hypothesis, it *cannot* be indifferent.

itself by violence or is admitted as umpire. The authority, by some means, is now supposed to be a fact—king, kaiser, or constable. A complete social state has grown up. The people are obeying a certain set of laws, and the sword is in the hands of the ruler. And now what is it that you maintain to be the last resolution of duty? Why, unqualified submission in the governed to the governor, for whom you actually claim a divine right.

It would be false to say that I do not consider this a surprising sophism,—I certainly do ; but it is, I admit, the sophism of the absolutist or Tory mind, and even of the vulgar conscience, all the world over, and in all time. It is, I repeat, just the absurdity of supposing the stream to rise above the height of its source. It is, indeed, the utter nonsense of making a part greater than the whole. It is making the reason for a particular command of the ruler transcend the sum total of the reasons for which the ruler exists. By the supposition, C interferes, justly, or with good ground,* because A and B are destroying each other. Be it so. But now, when C is, by a fresh supposition, destroying

* These fantastic alternative phrases are a necessity of discussion when one does not know how much is (*intended to be*) admitted or denied on the other side.

both A and B, the same reason must be good, *a multo fortiori*, for the intervention of D. And this for ever and ever? Certainly; obviously.

It is, indeed, readily granted that *what* may be endured by A and B from C for the sake of the reason of his function is an open question; in other words, D must not interfere until the harm C is doing exceeds the harm he prevents. This is a question of (what is called) divine expediency, to be determined on separate particular grounds in every separate particular case. But it is absurd to maintain, formally or informally, that C is to be obeyed because he has power. On the contrary, C is invested with power in order that no reason may arise why he *should* be obeyed. Simply and briefly,—for the thing may be stated in a thousand different ways,—he exists for a moral reason, and may cease to exist for the same.

Now, turning aside from the Hobbist or political absolutist, or rather taking the same question on to another level, let me resume the argument with yourself.

Suppose I am a speculative Greek, desirous of settling my faith upon a solid basis. Practically, I sacrifice at the temple; I respect the priests; I believe the

oracles. *Chronologically*, we will suppose, this practical faith of mine stands first in my mind. *Logically*, however, it must be subsequent. There can be no oracle if there is no Zeus ; and if Zeus be not wise and good, neither can the oracle be. For speculative purposes, then, I must make a clean slate of my mind, and suppose myself standing naked in the centre of things, without a single conviction.

So standing, I begin to look around me. In time, I generalise. Observing the relations of men and women to each other, I draw moral conclusions. Taking what I see, in the light of my own consciousness, (there is no other course possible in this stage of my story,) for a platform, I conclude that Zeus exists, and that Zeus is, we will suppose, a perfect being, all-wise, and all-good as all-powerful. It is *conceivable* that I may not come to this conclusion : it is *conceivable* that I may stop short at a very powerful, but not omnipotent,—a very good, but not omnibeneficent,—a very wise, but not omniscient being. But we will suppose that I conclude from what I see and feel to a precisely infinite Zeus. Then from Zeus I pass to [1st] historical questions, whether particular communications claiming to be from Zeus were, in fact, ever made at all ; to [2d] moral-historical questions, whether the communications

were probably from him ; and so on, till [3d] I come down to the oracle of yesterday and the sacrifice of to-day ;—my circle of belief being completed from the other side.

Now, what I would call attention to is this :—*Manifestly, it is impossible that the evidence for any conclusion under head 1, 2, or 3, should be greater than the evidence for my prime postulate, THAT ZEUS IS ; on the contrary, it must be less.** What, then, becomes of “ shadows,” the evidence for which ranks under either of those three heads ?

* It may be as well to state that the coincidences between these paragraphs, and the article upon Dr Newman's “ Apologia,” which appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* for September 1864, are accidental. The MS. had been lying in the desk of Mr Holbeach for more than two years. See Appendix.—ED.

X.

THE TERRORS OF THE LORD.

ONE of the arguments which I have sometimes heard and read against the idea that future punishment is not everlasting,—whether it end in the restoration or the destruction of the souls punished,—is, that in that case there is not motive enough for missionary exertion,—that people will not go and teach the heathen at great cost of health and wealth, and immense risk of all kinds, unless they are fully persuaded that nothing but their presence, with Bibles in their hands, can save the heathen from being miserable for ever.

This has always struck me as being one of the coolest and most impudent things ever ventured upon in controversy.

In the first place, it has been allowed by Christian divines of all classes, including the very greatest, that souls might be saved by the mediation of Jesus Christ

who never heard of Him,—that the effects of His salvation might be extended to them in their ignorance ; and, in the next place, it is obvious to reply,—“ How can *I* tell what motive for benevolent exertion you may deem sufficient? You are under a sacred obligation to go, and endeavour to bring these men and women more near to God and goodness,—or you are not. If you *are*, go about your business, and do not turn round upon the Lord of heaven and earth, saying, ‘ If the Cherokees are only to suffer for a limited period, it is not worth my while to go and carry your errand to them.’ ”

The force of this answer may be put in a stronger light by the following observations. It has been contended—is still contended—that a scholastic misinterpretation has perverted the meaning of the texts which are popularly employed to connect what is called “ faith,” or the reverse, with the ultimate condition of souls. Now, suppose it should be made out that these texts referred neither to heaven nor to hell, but to a “ kingdom of heaven ” on earth,—to reception or exclusion with respect to *its* privileges,—are we, then, to be told by modern disciples that the motive was not strong enough, and that the whole machinery of evangelism was in excess of the need for any machinery at

all? Might not the Lord of life be supposed to send some messenger to say to these objectors,—“Fools and blind! In *My* eyes, one grain of goodness is worth a world of effort. I want these souls,—go, bid them turn to Me *now*. Once make present to your slow, unwilling minds the Terrors of the Lord as they *are now*, and you will heed to-day the least whisper of His will. Am I to tell *you* whether that squalid Bushman there shall suffer a minute, a year, or millions of years, before you will bestir yourself to carry the message that he has a Father in heaven whose name is Love?”

There was once a clerk, who, foreseeing only one of two alternatives in the case, complained to his employer that his stool was too short. “You must get a higher stool, sir,” said he. “Oh no,” answered the master, “we’ll get a taller clerk.” In the momentous subject now before us, what we want is not better motives for the missionaries, but better missionaries for the motives—if the arguments fairly represent the missionaries; which I do not believe in the least.

In truth, the whole of the objection is a disclosure of inferiority of moral texture in those who press it. It is just as if a man should say, “I would not mind the trouble of going across the road, through the wind

and rain, to warn my neighbour, if I knew a burglar was this night proposing to cut his throat; but it is not worth my while to do it when I know the fellow will only break his arm." Or, to take a better illustration, it is as if I knew a man was about to commit a small theft, and did not care to warn and check him by appealing to his conscience, because so few crimes are now punished by death; whereas in the reign of George III. I might have done it.

All this only shows how our minds have got debauched by resting in Power as a final reason for our scheme of things. The essence of every motive that is good for anything, is not power, but conscience,—“I ought,”—not I *must*. Unless we add that love is better still, because it holds duty in solution.

Another form of this common argument against the teaching that the wicked will not be wicked and suffering for ever, is, that if that be so we have not sufficient left to frighten people with. “If I go and tell a villain that, unless he repents, he will be punished for only some hundreds of millions of billions of ages, he will snap his fingers at me, and keep on being a villain. Nothing short of eternity will rouse him.” This, again, is most audacious logic.

In plain, positive fact, people never form to them-

selves any idea of eternal misery. How should they? The word "eternal," if it acts at all, acts like "that blessed word Mesopotamia;"—that is, without suggesting any definite image. But, again, it remains to consider a set-off. Let it be granted that villains A, B, and C are reformed through fear of your Everlasting Hell. What effect—*not* of a reforming kind—may be produced upon the minds of D, E, F, and so on up to Z, by the same presentation of the terrible thing? That question waits to be answered. In truth I am convinced, have been for years convinced, and do now proclaim that I believe, that a fertile source of demoralisation is this notion of pain and depravity continued for ever.

In the first place, as to its emotional influence, it is vague, and represents to the mind no apprehensible relation of punishment to sin. *Eternal* punishment! Why, you would frighten your villain ten times more effectually if you could make him *sure* that he would have twenty years on the treadmill.

In the next place, taken as addressed to the intellect, the notion of infinite pain for finite offence is confusing. I repeat that I believe it to have been a mighty source of demoralisation. If the boundary-line of justice is so doubtful, who shall say what one

may do, and what one may not do? As a matter of fact, the sentiment of justice is usually weak in the acquiescent order of mind, which is the real foundation of the dislike which just men of the world entertain towards so many professors of religion. It is, indeed, totally impossible that the conscience can retain its simplicity of action if it is perpetually performing tasks of accommodation, and submitting itself to any authority whatever. Its office is not to submit, but to rule. Nobody has ever more distinctly asserted this than Bishop Butler,—no man has ever more pointedly maintained the “supremacy of conscience” in human nature, than he who has been, more than any other writer, quoted to confirm teaching of others to the effect that conscience may be bound to submit to (something called) authoritative truth.

Every man, with an aroused conscience, who seeks to represent to the unaroused conscience the wrath of God against sin, is naturally carried by the inspiration of the intensest of all emotion to the very verge of language. Naturally, he uses the strongest words he *can* use. If his words be impregnated with conscience, if a soul be in them, the mind of the listener, who may be startled by *them*, will not form definite

ideas as to time, place, or kind of pain. He will experience an overwhelming moral revulsion, with associations more or less physical according to his character and culture. He will see that the wrath of God against sin is strictly infinite and eternal, and if a physical image be necessary to make him see this more vividly, he will accept it. Perhaps such an image is necessary to the majority of the human race. But if now the scholastic intellect sets to work, and imprisons the mysteriously infinite terrors of the Lord in some formula of "everlasting punishment," definitely stated, and claiming to be sharply apprehended, mischief is done. The terror is gone; for the mind begins to criticise, to doubt, to explain away, and a mist of scepticism arises from this centre, (just as it might do from any other,) and perhaps gradually spreads itself over the whole of the creed of the man.

I sympathise, then, with those who fearlessly use the largest words to express the Divine Terrors, and who yet refuse to bind themselves by a creed upon the subject. But, on the other hand, I have no sympathy with those who, *once the question is raised* in logical form, dodge it by evasive language. I do myself believe that there is enough in the resources of the

Divine displeasure to make sin dreadful, if it were not hateful. But if I am asked, "Do you believe any one creature will be wicked and wretched for ever?" I boldly answer, "No, I do not; and should refuse to believe it on any evidence which presupposed the Divine goodness."

There are two classes of Confessors who very much embarrass the march of Truth.

First, there are the people who evade the intellectual test when put to them, like the polite Frenchman:—"Do you believe the sun moves round the earth, or the earth round the sun?" *Answer*. "Sometimes one, and sometimes the other,—a little of both."

Secondly, there are the persecutors—the people who make it a point of honour to force their faiths upon you. "I give you my *parole d'honneur*," said another Frenchman, "that the sun moves round the earth. Believe, or I run you through!"

Now, God only knows from which side truth most suffers—the side which is so liberal of its politeness, or the side which is so free with its *parole d'honneur* and its steel.

XI.

TO ONE WHO FEELS THAT A PRINCIPLE MAY BE PUSHED TOO FAR.

BEFORE me lies a letter, in which you refer me to a certain authority* (which need not be specified) for a restatement of the difficulties you seem to feel about the “difference between principle and practice”—the inconvenience of “pushing things too far”—the necessity for living “two lives: an inner life” of ideas, “and an outer life” of accommodation—and the propriety of cherishing “useful errors.” I have carefully read it, and can only say that all this appears to me to be utterly idle. There is no meaning whatever in the word Right,—no Justice, no Goodness, to rule the world,—no hope for a single living creature, from the dragon-fly to the poet or the hero,—unless I am bound, the moment I know (*i.e.*, believe that I know) what *is* right, to go and do it at all risks, whether to myself or others.

* I often wish we had in English an exact analogue of the Spanish participial adjective *consabido*: it would save much circumlocution.—H. H.

What all this discussion about the difference between "principle" and "practice" comes to, I cannot, for the life of me, make out. You believe a certain thing to be right. Well, you set about doing it, and are checked by "practical" impediments. But what then? What on earth has this to say to the question of duty? The case is just as if you had tried to tunnel through the Alps, and had been stopped by some unforeseen obstacle. Or as if (to use an illustration of Mr Mill's) trying to get to the North Pole, you had only succeeded in reaching Hull. You would have gone farther if you could, and you guided your course by the North Star.

But I know very well this is not a complete statement of the case as it stands in your mind. The idea which has taken possession of you is that of a conflict of duties.

A conflict of duties is an absurdity. A conflict of natural emotions is quite possible, and quite common; for example, a man, whose wife and whose mother both needed help, might be very much distressed and puzzled if he found he could not do all that was needed for both. But there would be a certain thing to be done which, once discovered, would be his duty; and that thing, whatever it was, would stand in the

same place to him as any other matter of moral obligation whatever.

These, and kindred matters, do really present themselves to my mind as so obvious, that it seems almost trivial to go on with them. But I have heard people talk about second-best duties which become binding upon them when (by some act of their own, or otherwise) a first-best duty has become impracticable.

I deny the existence of second-best duties. As accommodated language, such phraseology may pass, and does pass; but it has, in strictness, no meaning for the conscience,—absolutely none whatever. The error arises from confounding Rules and Principles. An invariable *rule* of duty is impossible, ridiculous; but principles never change. For example, from a first principle of Morals is deduced the *rule* of Morals, —You must not steal another man's bread, or (by consequence) eat bread which is stolen. But, now, let us imagine a case of "practical" difficulty to arise. Let us suppose that you are advancing upon a place where you know A has wrongfully confined B, whom he intends to destroy to-morrow; but that, for want of food, you cannot continue your journey, while the only bread that lies in your path is, you have been in-

formed, stolen. Would it be right to recruit your strength with the stolen bread? By the principle, yes. For it is a greater violation of *it* that A should wrongfully slay B, than that you should eat bread stolen by C, or even by yourself, from D; and for that reason you presume the consent of D to what you are doing. In other words, when you eat the bread, you perform not a half duty, or a modified wrong; you perform an act of duty, pure and simple, just as much as if you had restored to D the bread wrongfully taken from him. The only thing that could possibly modify this decision of the conscience, would be the contingency that D was himself perishing for want of the bread stolen by C.

Again. It may have been quite wrong (I believe it was) of the English to take possession of India; but it does not follow that it would be right of England to relinquish her Indian empire. It *is* right, however, possessing it, to act in the interest and spirit of the principle which made it wrong to seek the possession.

One of the drawbacks of every code of laws enforced upon communities, is the partial degradation of the popular conscience. It must occur in applying every Rule by means of Force to masses.

Of course, it is of the essence of a governmental law

that it should be enforceable. To this end a standard must be chosen which shall contain only what is sure to be possible, and shall have respect only to external conduct.

Thus it is impossible to compel a man to be benevolent and pitiful. The more you distrained his goods for charity to another, the more hard-hearted he would become. But it *is* possible to compel a man to pay a shilling-in-the-pound poor-rate. You thus obtain a provision for the poor, which it ought not to be necessary to enforce; but you obtain it with the drawback that X, Y, Z, and a third of the alphabet, will consider their legal obligation the final measure of their moral obligation in relation to poverty.

Again. You cannot make a man love a woman; but you can make him fulfil the physical responsibilities which he has brought upon himself by the pretence of love. So you compel the married man to support the children, and the mother of the children, he having, by the fact of marriage, registered himself as intending to do so. But, again, there is a drawback; for the effect of this is found to be, that the man who has incurred responsibilities which are in fact marital without registering the fact, feels his conscience slide easily away from all sense of an obliga-

tion which the law and custom of the country do not recognise. Against this drawback there is, however, the set-off, that however low you pitch your *datum*-line, it will yield a discipline to consciences which are at *about the same level* by nature.

On the other hand, the cruelties which occur in the working out of general rules by imperfect instruments, sometimes sting people into crime who would otherwise be good, or entangle them in situations in which crime seems inevitable to them.

Simple, uneducated persons think of things in the lump, and laws and customs, and all the grave respectabilities of life, are tied up, in their minds, in the same bundle with their trust in whatever is high, and just, and good. So when the law comes to such a person in the shape of a Destroyer and an Enemy, his whole nature may be so bruised that it will seek no further. Suppose you had all your life looked up to some great lord as a general benefactor and friend; suppose you had always believed that his secretary or steward faithfully represented him—was, in fact, identified with him; suppose everybody told you, in the most solemn manner, that the very function and nature of the secretary was to represent the goodness and the right-

ness of the great lord ; then suppose the very first time you came in contact with this representative secretary, he ill-used and crushed you,—are you quite sure of what you would do ? You would go, perhaps, to the great lord and complain to him ; but, perhaps, you would not. If you were sceptical, you might ; otherwise, you would simply feel bewildered, and as if you wanted some corner in which to cry your heart out, or, if you were a man of much aggressive energy, as if you must inflict pain on some other person. And here remember how small a matter may turn the scale of impulse, and alter the course of events. Dinner or no dinner may make all the difference. A man with an empty stomach may get excited beyond all power of self-control ; when, if he had only eaten a biscuit, he might have tided safely over the difficult passage in his life.

Besides this, there are the exceptionally good people, who, more or less willingly, endure inconvenience from rules which wrong them, though they are necessary for lower natures. It is of no use to make any foolish attempts to force such minds up to another level, so that kind of tragedy is always going on. It *must* be so, for while rules must be made for the majority, a

minority must always be liable to be bruised by their pressure. Something may, doubtless, be done to prevent the pressure amounting to destructive misery ; but suffering there must always be, from the simple fact that the best are always the fewest, and that rules, in order that they may be enforceable, must be kept down to the lowest level of practicability. Only do not let us look too calmly on at the suffering,—as we are so apt to do when it is other people, and not ourselves, who endure ; and let us not forget that the existence of pain is always a warning that something is wrong.

Permit me to continue this attempt to lay the foundation of a complete understanding between us upon these matters. A practical man may be supposed to say :—“ Under the pressure of circumstances, life being what it is, we must act upon the instant, endeavouring only to act for the best : we must proceed by general rules : we may often punish too much, or punish too little, or punish the comparatively innocent, while the comparatively guilty escape ; but that must pass. The law must be upheld.”

Be it so. But what is this, if not a confession that your symbol of Right—namely, the infliction of

what you call justice, involves a certain amount of Wrong?

“ I admit it ; it is a necessary evil.”

You *must* admit it. But see, then, what follows :— Let the number 100 represent your moral estimate of a given offence. Then let 100 represent (as, of course, it would) the fair punishment for the offence, including full-blown intention and full-blown performance. You then make your general rule—a law of the State, or a custom of society. It can only deal with the outside of things, because it must be something definite and tangible. So that you find it (inevitably, you say) covering cases where neither the act nor the intent is full-blown. Now, suppose you get hold of X, whose total criminality, under the category to which your general rule belongs, is represented by (say) 30. There is Z, round the corner, breaking your rule in the dark, to the whole extent of your full-blown 100. You do not catch Z ; you do catch X, and lay on your 100 penalty—counting it a less evil to do this than to break your rule.

“ Certainly. The law must be upheld, or we should all be nowhere.”

Again, very good ; but note this :—*There is a law above you, against which you yourself have sinned*

in punishing X. And your turn will come for punishment, remember that. If X did wrong 30, and you punish him 100, you committed a fresh crime, you see !

“But I was *forced* to punish X—forced by the law.”

Be it so. The law above the law will be forced to punish *you*—that’s all !

While we are waiting, our turn, we can remember that in the enormous complication of life, others, no worse than we, may be bearing penalties in vindication of the laws by which we are protected. You admit that the rule falls heavily at times on the comparatively innocent. Then, recollect that in every case of over-expiation the excess of pain is, in reality, a sacrifice, on the part of the sufferer, to your security. Recollect, I say, that our lives are vicarious all round ; that every living soul has thus a share in the wrongdoing of every other living soul. The whole business of the moral world is carried on by a comprehensive system of martyrdom. And, unless the defects of the law were from time to time thrown up into relief by people who, through the law, suffer for goodness, there would soon be no law left by which to make people suffer for badness. “The blood of the Christian mar-

tyrs was the seed of the Church." The blood of social martyrs is the manure of social order.

Thus you will perceive how entirely I sympathise with you in much that you have at times pressed upon me—unnecessarily, you see. But I feel, that unless the recognition of the hardship which attends the working of general rules be accompanied with something else, we run great danger in another direction. That way of looking at things tends to mere oscillation between laxity and severity—the rule, as strictly enforced, standing in the mind for final right.

Here, then, my quarrel begins. We must not overlook the laxity; but we must not acknowledge that any rule can do more than represent right imperfectly and for a time. If any man seeks to apply the rule—which is only a generalisation from experience—as final, I oppose him. "You stand for justice." Well, let us see you *do* justice. Do not say you "cannot draw the line"—it is your pretension to do so. You come into court with scales and knife, to take your just pound of flesh. *Now take it.* But if you spill one drop of blood your theory is forfeit. And spill blood you must; for every inch of life is vascular, and bleeds at even the most scientific incision. But long before you have got so far as to make that attempt, in your en-

deavour to deal with life in terms of your "bond," you will have faltered and recanted, and dropped scales and knife; unless, indeed, you are either more or less than human.

All that is, in another shape, what we have already agreed about. But it is not final truth. Behind, or above the Rule, lies the principle, and we must go on amending the rule, as fast as new facts crack the mould of thought: incessantly striving to make it juster. The Justice *is*; and we can believe in it, and struggle after it, though we can never realise it in concrete shape. What I complain of is the setting up of expediency as justice; and then saying, when palpable wrong is done, "Hush, hush, we must wink a little!" I maintain, on the contrary, that we must *not* wink. We must be kind, but we must be faithful. The alternative is what we actually see in the world—confusion of conscience, cynicism, moral scepticism, and masked disorder shoved aside among the *tacenda*.

I am as far as ever, then, from understanding those who talk of pushing their principles too far. How can a "principle" be pushed too far? On the contrary, a principle is something that never can be realised—never will be got up to; it *cannot* be exceeded. What

is really meant by such phraseology is that *rules* which attempt to carry out principles are liable to abuse. No *rule* or form can do more than imperfectly represent a principle; and if it be strained—that is to say, treated as if it (the rule) were a perfect embodiment of the principle, mischief is necessarily the consequence. A “principle” is an ideal—something never to be attained, but always to be striven after. The rule—called, for purposes of identification, by the name of the principle—is the instrument of that strife. The tendency of the popular mind is to make it the *tyrant* of the strife; and then, what is called the “principle” is brought into discredit. But it is not honest obedience to a principle—it is inhumanly taking advantage of one—when a slop tailor underpays his workmen. When we say that a man has *a right* to buy in the cheapest market, we do not mean that it is always *right* for him to do it. There is all the difference in the world between Right and *a right*. All we mean is, that nobody is entitled by force to prevent his doing it, if he likes.

In all things allowance must be made for friction; the quantity of allowance depending on the complication of the conditions. In human life, of course, the allowance should be great. But the *principle* remains,

when once demonstrated; an anchor, an ark, a pole-star, a faith. What would be thought of an engineer who, having to provide a new machine, should begin with the allowance for friction? For that is just what, I contend, *you* do, and millions like you. No, no; let us have the bridge rigidly planned according to the *laws* of mechanics, and we will make our allowance for friction afterwards. It is not necessary to multiply illustrations, or we might go on for ever; taking, for example, the question of *temperament* in the tuning of keyed instruments, or of blending and modulation in calculating the effect of colour.

Of the same order as the teaching that a principle may be pushed too far, is the teaching that error may be useful. I deny it. If, in retrospect, it is perceived that untrue things have served good purposes, it is not because they were errors, but because they were *then* truths, or things sincerely believed. The moment I begin to see, or suspect, that an opinion is wrong, or a symbol false or incomplete, my duty is to attempt a process of rectification in my own mind. As to the errors of others, my duty may vary—it all depends on the hypothesis of my relations with them; but though aggression upon their mistakes *may*, possibly, not be

my duty, all complicity in their mistakes *must* be wrong. Pray, let us remember that.

When a poet complains that heaven is farther off to him than when he was a boy, because he has ceased to believe that God sits up in the sky, just over the steeple somewhere, he only admits that he has neglected to seek a rectified symbol of a truth, when the old one had ceased to serve; that he has not, in maturity, done for himself, what, when he was young, his instructors did for him. It is, alas, a kind of neglect of which we are all apt to be guilty, and is a very fair and very touching topic of poetry. But when an instinctive fancy is at all adhered to by the mind, in the teeth of scientific knowledge, it is not that instinctive fancy is better than scientific fact; for there is nothing better, higher, sweeter, more wholesome, than the truth; and whithersoever it leads, you are bound to follow it. *But you can never overtake it.* If you clutch the wings of the morning, and pursue it, there still will be a brightening light far ahead of you. *And you can never escape it.* If you make your bed in Hades, it will come, fluttering the fellowship of lying ghosts around you, and lighten through the infernal gates of your dreams. Well, seat yourself between the horns of this dilemma, like the chaste

goddess in the centre of her luminous crescent, and tell me what you see. Is it not this? *That where an instinctive fancy is adhered to by the mind in the teeth of known fact, it is because the fancy is an acceptable symbol of truth, in a sphere where a variety of symbols may all be true to a variety of minds?* In other words, that the “fancy” is (not erroneous, but) as true as anything whatever that can be said upon the subject. What is required of a formula, or any statement of belief, is that it *coincide*, as to its place and direction, with the truth it applies to. More than representative it never can be; as much as representative a thousand differing statements may very well be. Imagine them placed, like geological strata, one over the other, varying in endless particulars. Add the supposition, that in each one there is an eyelet hole, which professes to let the central truth be seen at the bottom. In order that the formulas should all be true, it is required—nothing more is required, but nothing less will suffice—it is required, I say, that when they are all superposed one over the other, a straight metaphysical rod should be able to transpierce them all and come out in the direction of the truth aimed at. Unless this be well understood and firmly grasped, the conscience cannot escape confusion. It is spiritual

death to go on trying to believe things because they are useful to be believed, when you think they are, at the same time, untrue. And it ends in spiritual cachexy to flinch from looking into apparent contradictions of heart and head, for fear of meeting evil creatures in the long dark corridors of the soul's remoter places. Come, then—the faithful soul must say—Come, Doubt or Difficulty, or whatever your name is; come, you troublesome gaunt Angel, and let me wrestle with you until the break of day! I will not let you go until you bless me, and if I get a shrunk sinew in the struggle, I have counted that cost. The wheels of the morning, kindling as they go, do I not hear them afar off as they mount up the darkness? And do I not know that when the first flakes of light are flung at our feet, you will leave me, Angel—with your blessing, Angel, and the name of a prince? In the meantime, let me know all I can; make sure of as much hard, stern truth as possible. And, as a general rule, let me use what I acquire, and as fast as I acquire it, whatever mistakes are knocked over. Knowledge is always power. It is Thor's hammer, which not only hits, but comes back to the hand of the hitter with increase of momentum for another fling; but faculty unused degenerates; and truths are apt to slip out of any mind

which will not encounter the risks of applying them, in simple trust that the wounds they make in oneself or others will find a Divine healing.

All this applies to the notion, so commonly urged in certain discussions, that a thing may be proved to be true because it meets our needs. But a proof of this kind can never go beyond the induction of instances on which it is founded. If a pious Buddhist finds the Tooth of Buddha meets his needs,—why, it does ; and there is an end. If ten thousand pious Romanists find the uplifting of the Host meets their needs,—why, it does ; and there is an end again. But nobody can really believe a proposition because it agrees with him,* or with other people. Thus, again, the famous *solvitur ambulando* principle, with which the names of Dr Arnold and some Broad Church teachers have been connected, never did, never could, make anything but sceptics. To tell a man who doubts to go on acting as if he did not doubt at all must corrupt or weaken, or both, the intellect or the morale, or both.

* The error here appears to be a perversion of the great truth that our theory of things must cover all the facts. See what is said, in this respect, upon the subject of Theism as compared with Non-theism in the Letter to Mr Lewes.—ED.

When a man doubts, he is called upon to *suspend* action. He must get his breakfast, of course; meet his friends, and buy an umbrella, if he wants one. But if he suspect a flaw in the Athanasian Creed, he is bound *not* to read it to the people next Sunday, whatever consequences follow. God, it has been finely said, insists upon having a correspondence between our faith and our conduct; and, if we do the thing we believe to be wrong, He proceeds to abolish the discord by letting down our thought to the level of our life. Now, the only escape from the action of this law is into insanity, intellectual or moral. People who have lost faith in universal postulates of any kind are intellectually insane; and people who have lost faith in moral realities are morally insane. Large numbers of persons are, by the very constitution of their nature, exempted from the action of this law—children, the majority of women, and men of *unlogical* minds. Also if a man does anything only *doubting* whether it is right or wrong, the damage to his head and heart will be, of course, indirect only, and difficult to estimate. But the general effect is as I have said.

Thus, you will see I am of opinion—

1. That principles cannot be pushed too far, though Rules may.

2. That Error is *always* undesirable.

3. That Belief and Action should *always* correspond, and that in case of Doubt or Suspended Belief, there should be a corresponding Suspense of Action.

I agree with you that practice is the sphere of accommodation ; but I contend that the accommodation should always *recognise* the principle, and should never depart from the *line of direction* of the principle. That is a very different thing from saying that principles may be carried to extremes ; for it implies that, the farther we can carry them, the nearer we are to right, and truth, and happiness. I have taken pains to show you that I am not blind to the suffering caused by the rigid application of imperfect *rules* ; but all vicarious pain belongs to the sphere of Religion, or the Divine Life.

XII.

WOMEN'S "MOVEMENTS."

NO doubt, in all that relates to women, changes are coming upon us, and the unorganised and unrecognised movements for change are not the least striking or the least momentous. Those who have carefully considered the whole subject, believe they foresee the general outcome of all these discussions and "movements." If I were a Jesuit, and wished to postpone what will in my opinion be a good thing as long as possible, I should write about the women's movements a great deal that I now decline to write. But silence is, in this case, the best policy, and half what might be said shall remain unspoken. The world is like a child that will not have its face washed and its hair combed. When the thing is over, it feels all the more comfortable, but if you give it the smallest warning, it will fight and howl so that you will be nearly terrified into leaving it in all its discomfort, without an effort to make it nice and clean.

One thing must be certain to all people who have a faith to live by,—namely, that the *good* people, whatever mistakes they commit, will succeed better in the end than the clever folks who know too much of "human nature" to believe in goodness at all. The crudest inapplicability of a Midnight Meeting Movement has more hope in it than the cleverest criticism of a sceptic of the stews. For my part, I decline to help the Midnight Meeting Movement; and, equally, I decline to oppose it. But the brutalities of moral scepticism, however applied, should be opposed by all men who strive to be good.

The whole subject is so hazardous that one scarcely knows what to touch and what to leave alone. But a few paragraphs may be ventured upon.

In the first place, with regard to those who think the sphere of female activity may be much widened with benefit to women and men too, we cannot but be struck with the poverty of imagination which prevails on the critical or opposing side. If it be suggested that some sphere of political action must belong to women, the question is immediately put—What could women do in the House of Commons? It never seems

to enter the head of the objector that, in the first place, the House of Commons may not last for ever, in its present form ; or that, in the second place, the political action of women may be something totally different from that exercised by a member of Parliament, and yet as real in its way. The same kind of remark applies to the suggestion that women must have some natural sphere in the administration of justice. The critic immediately draws a ridiculous picture of a woman in a wig and gown perspiring in a noisy law-court. But he has wasted his labour. We may laugh, but what then ? I have laughed till the tears have come at the absurdities of the Women's Advocates ; but, when the laugh is over, returns upon me the mighty conviction that the "sphere" of female activity is not yet developed ; and that, in spite of temporary extravagances, it will be developed, and in becoming, graceful, and truly feminine methods.

What will the methods be ? My dear critic, how should I know ? But one thing is certain,—the world cannot see greater or more unexpected changes than it has already seen ; and things, that everybody despaired of, do actually come about in time and in forms that we all get reconciled to.

A certain degree of the ridiculous always attaches in my own mind, to the idea of concerted action on the part of women ;—a "Mothers' Association,"—a "Dorcas Society,"—a "Ladies' Committee ;"—these things, I confess, make me laugh ; and I should be inclined to tease or banter a lady who belonged to any such body. But, for all that, smile as I may, I feel that there ought to be some way of arriving at the collective feeling of women upon great questions. The question of War, for example, is one in which women should surely have a voice. I do not see my way to what seems desirable ; but, if it *be* desirable, the way will be found, and the truth will, in the meanwhile, do no harm.

That half of the adult population which stays at home is interested in the question of peace or war as well as the half which goes out to fight. The returns of "killed and wounded" do not cover the miseries of war. We want, also, returns of the broken-hearted, the widowed, the ruined ; and, not less, returns of perverted sympathy, inversions of natural feeling, wrongs done in the name of right, and the amount of injury bequeathed by a great war to the moral sentiment of a people. And all these matters are, certainly, some concern of those whose sole func-

tions, in the vulgar view of things, are to bind up the wounds of the hurt, and plait crowns for the brave.

The wonder is that it never appears to strike the civilised woman of to-day, that she should have a voice in the question, *To fight or not to fight?* She seems to think her office is exclusively a subsequent one, and begins only when the lint and the bandages are wanted. True, Mrs Major O'Dowd makes the major his cup of coffee before he starts, and poor Amelia Osborne runs about with George's sash in her hands; but that is not much to do, and it is too late to interfere when the air is thick with drum-beats,—as much too late as when the mother of dead Sisera looks forth at the lattice, and asks why his chariot wheels are so long in coming. The poor lady should have asked him, before he started, why he was so quick in going.

It will not be supposed that any one is recommending that, when war is declared, the individual woman should hang upon the skirts of the individual warrior, and keep him from the field. No: if fighting is to be done, Antony will fight none the worse if Cleopatra, or Cleopatra's "betters," buckles on his armour. But has she not sufficient interest in the results of war to be entitled to a voice in the counsels which decree or forbid it? If woman is so wise, so tender, so good,

living habitually so near the skies, and by nature so open to catch celestial whispers as she is said to be, is there any reason in modern civilisation why she should have dropped a function which was hers in "ruder" times? The old Scandinavians are said to have consulted her, with religious deference, before going to war; and it is only the maintenance of the mediæval ideal, supposed to be Christian, which puts her out of court in all but "domestic" questions. I suggest her recall, and should not even object to her putting herself forward a little. If she finds Philip drunk bent on war, let her appeal to Philip sober. If, after all, she and Philip (sober) agree that the sword must be unsheathed, she will know her place: on his return, victorious, she will soothe his wounds with the balm of her kisses, crown his flattered forehead, and tell the children to get the lamps ready for the illumination. But there is no reason why the collective womanhood of a nation should waive a function which belongs to every little girl who has a playmate. Such a little girl, at an alley corner, did I yesterday hear appealing to her little male friend, with his sleeves tucked up, and his nostrils wide. "Don't you fight, John," said the little maid, "when you've no call to." Now these things are an allegory. We big

heroes are not yet past hearing a still small voice, and thrilling to a soft hand laid on our brawny shoulders. The clank of what is going on at the ship-yard and the smithy might be loud; but the nation would listen, if the collective womanhood of the nation would only say, in case of need, "Don't you fight, John, when you've no call to."

I am sorry to say I have very little faith in the "Social Science" literature which particularly affects the promotion of Women's Movements. Public discussion is well,—must, upon the whole, be helpful; but it should be sincere; and what strikes one at a glance, upon reading "Social Science" literature, is the enormous disproportion which exists between the pretence and the performance of the writing; the fact that under high-sounding titles one finds chiefly philosophic platitude, and tract literature smeared over with phraseology of the "liberal" school.

It is a very common thing for reformers to be extravagant or defiantly mistaken, both in their writings and in their lives. This is natural, though lamentable. Leaders of forlorn hopes are desperate men, and if their courage is a *living* courage it will prompt them to excess, or to what at the time will seem like ex-

cess. No blame of this kind, however, can be attributed to our so-called Social Science writers. Quite the contrary; their heroism is mostly of a very safe order; and, if I complained of them at all, it would be because they give themselves the airs and claim the honours of the advanced guard, while taking very good care to be never any more than abreast of a difficulty,—and rarely *that*.

But, in truth, I *complain* of nothing. Let these people write on. Only one thing remains,—this sort of thing is not Social *Science*. Read these books, and you would think that all the vital questions of life were for ever settled; that what is called "civilisation" was the last hope of the world, and that all we have now to do is to get rid of crinolines, open more day-schools, lay on extra policemen here and there, ventilate our houses, and teach little girls how to cook potatoes. We might as well look for social science in a House of Commons' debate, or in the charge of a judge to a jury, as in the greater part of this writing. All this talk relates to questions of quite third-class social *policy*, and very rarely discloses a glimpse of a principle. On the contrary, the theories of life upon which all sorts of things are proposed *by the very same people* are so discrepant that one is

often reminded, turning over "Social Science" records, of certain rhymes about the different kinds of weather people ask for :—

" If weather and weather
Were mixed together,
The Fiend himself couldn't live in such weather."

The greater number of the "Social Science" people who advocate the throwing open of new spheres of labour for women, appear not to have discovered how vitally the whole question is related to the fundamental topics of moral science. In strictness it is altogether a *subsequent* question, which should be content to receive an *inferred*, not a primary, answer. The fundamental question of social science is the point in dispute between the government people and the no-government people. On the one hand, we have, and always have had, the no-government or "development" school, which says that if individuals are left to themselves, and permitted freely to obey the interior sense of right, lead whither it will, then there are natural laws which will inevitably work out from the natural, unrestricted competition of individual rights that which is right for all. A Women's-Rights advocate of this school says, How do we know what woman was intended to be ?

All is growth, development, ceaseless change. For anything we can at present tell, the gorilla may not fall farther short of Tennyson than the woman of to-day of what woman is intended to be. Hands off! If Mary Anne has the strength of a Hercules, or the genius of a Laplace, she was intended to use it. For anything that appears to the contrary, the turning-point of the world's wellbeing at this moment may be that Mary Anne should freely "develop" her biceps or her taste for figures.

This is the "extreme left" of women's-rights advocacy, but its arguments and modes of thought are perpetually intruding themselves, be it noted, into the writings of women's women and women's men of *all* schools; which leads to the unscientific incongruity just noted in Social Science literature. On the other hand, we have the government or anti-development school, of which Mr Carlyle is the extremest specimen, with his graduated despotism of the best and wisest. No, says this school, we do not believe in your "development" business. There are fixed types for everything. Essentially, woman is unchangeable, and, by parity of reason, her function in social life. Some ideal must be assumed for the sake of order and good government, and to the maintenance of that ideal must

be sacrificed many individual idiosyncrasies. Therefore, however hard it may be for Mary Anne, with that biceps of hers, we cannot allow her to quarry stones or go to the wars; she must make pins and do embroidery; for the wellbeing of the world in all ages depends, not on the "development" of the individual in obedience to a law from within, but in the keeping up of a certain general standard by the enforcing of a law from without—a law specific and absolute, and furnishing the only escape from anarchy and chaos.

Now, either of these schools, having asserted its *principle*, may, by way of Divine expediency, logically do or propose to do something which falls short of the principle, but it cannot logically do anything which contradicts its principle. If it does, it immediately becomes "unscientific," whatever other honours it may claim.

Let us take an illustration. You say Free Trade is right. Very good. But the *principle* which justifies free trade condemns compulsory vaccination. Now, you may reasonably support compulsory vaccination in two different ways:—(1.) You may support it as a Tory, or an adherent of the Extreme Right-hand or "paternal" school of government; (2.) You may support it as a temporary expedient, justifiable as military

law may sometimes be justifiable, but *only* so. And if you let out, in other ways, that you belong to the school which goes in for free trade, you are bound to show, in defending compulsory vaccination, that you do so with the full knowledge that it is inconsistent with the principle, or root-idea of your system. But if, while glorifying free trade in customary phrases, you also talk of compulsory vaccination, (or anything coming under the same category of Governmental interference,) as if you believed in the Divine Right of Constables, or in the paternal function of the magistrate, *then* you are indeed dealing with a social question; but you know nothing of social *science*. It is not at all suggested, you perceive, that you must take either the Right side or the Left side, but that you must avoid blowing hot and cold with one breath.

In some recent writing of women's advocates, we have, I fancy, been overdone with glorifications of female goodness and purity. Indeed, the most extravagant things have been said. I once read a story in which a lady-friend of the heroine said to her, in reference to a suitor, "If his heart be not as clear as crystal, reject him." Good heavens! what woman alive has the right to make such a demand of mortal man?

“Woman,” says an American authoress, whose books are obtaining some currency over here, “Woman has in every age been obliged to submit her better inspiration to the baseness and wickedness of man ;” not, be it observed, to the baseness of wicked *men*, but to that of the *sex*, who are, by implication, morally inferior to women. Now this, at least, is a question upon which I can speak out ; for I hope nobody would think of me as wanting in reverence for women. My estimate of the sex is, not lower, but immeasurably higher than that which is secretly cherished by men of society. But, certainly, I do not believe, as at present advised, in the moral superiority of women as compared with men. Women are more attached, more ready to submit to authority, and less subject to certain importunities of impulse, but that is merely to say that they are different ; and that they have their own peculiar good qualities, not that they are better. This is, of course, waiving the development question altogether, and taking them just as they are.

The estimates of the social helpfulness of women which are before the world appear to have been founded upon two totally different views of their relation to men. One presupposes that the husband is to be helped and bettered by an intelligent and sym-

pathising equal, over whom he neither feels nor asserts any predominance ; the other assumes the predominance, to begin with, subjugates the woman, puts her at a distance from the pursuits of the man, and reduces her share of the joint lot to consolation and compassion—sympathy, or fellow-feeling, is out of the question, because she is not supposed to understand. Like Cleopatra, she may buckle on the armour in a childish way, but it is not pretty and modest unless she asks, "What's this for?" This, of course, is the ordinary ideal of a wife in the respectable classes of English society.

That this kind of woman does not help on the work of the world by her intelligence, or by her appreciation of conscientious effort, is certain enough. The words of the late Mrs John Stuart Mill upon the subject are only moderate :—

"In Catholic countries the wife's influence is another name for that of the priest : he gives her, in the hopes and emotions connected with a future life, a consolation for the sufferings and disappointments which are her ordinary lot in this. Elsewhere, her weight is thrown into the scale either of the most commonplace or of the most outwardly prosperous opinions—either those by which censure will be escaped, or by which

worldly advancement is likeliest to be procured. In England the wife's influence is usually on the illiberal and anti-popular side: this is generally the gaining side for personal interest and vanity; and what to her is the democracy or liberalism in which she has no part—which leaves her the pariah it found her? The man himself, when he marries, usually declines into conservatism; begins to sympathise with the holders of power more than with its victims; and thinks it his part to be on the side of authority. As to mental progress, except those vulgar attainments by which vanity or ambition is promoted, there is generally an end to it in a man who marries a woman mentally his inferior, unless, indeed, he is unhappy in marriage or becomes indifferent. From a man of twenty-five or thirty, after he is married, an experienced observer seldom expects any further progress in mind or feelings. It is rarely that the progress already made is maintained. Any spark of the *mens divinius*, which might otherwise have spread and become a flame, seldom survives for any length of time unextinguished."

There is, however, another and most important thing to be said upon this subject. What is the precise relation of affection to conscience? It is one of the most flagrantly-obvious of facts, that the mere instinc-

tive capacity of attachment is stronger in women than in men. It is also one of the most sublime and momentous of facts—one in which a humble faith can least be spared by us. There is no fear of our losing it. True it is that a woman may have this immortal capacity of love and yet be an impossible companion ; but the love *is*—an anchor for the struggling heart ready to sink in the rude sea of circumstance. There are tens of thousands of men—this is not cant, but stubborn fact—who can think coldly of the martyr at the stake, but who can be roused to faith in goodness and courage in action by some true story or some living proof of woman's love. It sometimes seems to me that that faith in goodness, as a fact in the constitution of things, which alone makes possible any superstructure of definite religious emotion, obstinately refers itself in the human mind to some accredited action of self-sacrificing love. *What do you hang on to?* is a question which sounds curiously no doubt ; but, pray, suppose it translated, and let me ask you what is the ultimate foundation in your soul of that belief in the *bond fide* character of the moral arrangements under which you live, without which you would not care to exist another minute? Probably it is a question which you have never asked yourself ; and you may have lived

a most healthy and beautiful life—as women and children do—without any attempt at analysing even its most precious things. But now the question is put, you will allow that there are times when your belief in goodness is shaken, and in the storms of circumstance you feel about for an anchorage. *Then*, let me ask you, *What do you hold on by?* No sort of abstract proposition will do, for every such proposition is open to doubt, and may be made to wait for proof. You will find, if you recollect your experience, that it is always some present touch of personal *love* that you hang on by; and that from time to time in your life you have to go back to the condition of the babe at the breast, which can hardly see yet, and draws from the smile in its mother's eye *its* religion, *its* trust, *its* morality, and in that very act appropriates, passively, the spiritual element out of which all future religious and moral growth is to come. Test this, if you like, by a horrible supposition. Fancy all the knowledge of good and evil remaining, and all the love gone. Of course I mean gone from your memory as well as from your presence and possession; for doubtless you might live on recollected love for a time. Can you conceive your being anything but a devil under such circumstances?

I do not for a moment say this criticism is final. Obviously there is an assumption in it. It assumes that we, the men, are the world, and *ought* to be drawing upon the moral resources of the women; whereas, the very theory of the other side is perfect sympathy, and a perfect moral equilibrium. But it may serve to make us fair in judging others, if we reflect that, although in one case a woman who has, along with an affectionate heart, a poor base conscience, may be dragging her husband down to lower levels than he would himself choose, yet in another case, and (for the present) indeed, on the whole, the tender faithful love of women is a great stay to the consciences of men, because it predisposes them to believe that there is such a thing as goodness, and gives them something to hold on by.

XIII.

TO A YOUNG LADY ABOUT TO WRITE A NOVEL.

AND so, my dear, you are going to write a novel? I heard this piece of news with a little surprise, because, whatever abilities one has, it is impossible, as Marmontel says, to paint portraits until one has seen faces; and I know that your experience of life has been very limited. It is possible, indeed, that you may have one short, intense story to tell; but I hope not, my dear; for, if so, it is pretty sure to be a sad one. I suppose the real state of the case to be, that you are going to enter upon a course of training as a novelist, of which course this first effort is to be the modest beginning—that you *mean* it to be modest; and that you mean also to confine yourself to what you have really felt, or seen others feel. And, since you ask me, I will give you the best hints I can upon the general subject.

I take it for granted that you have exercised yourself a little in the mere art of story-telling. But I think I can suggest something new in that particular. A very good plan to commence with, is to take up in your own mind a tale of acknowledged merit at some point a little before the end, and, working from that point, to try and vary the catastrophe without running into improbabilities or incongruities. Let me show you what I mean. You know the story of "Silas Marner?" A well-to-do man neglects, for many years, to acknowledge his child, by a wretched, vulgar wife, because he fears it will obstruct his path to marriage with another woman. In the meanwhile, the child is brought up by the poor weaver, Silas Marner; grows accustomed to poverty; and takes root, by her affections, in the scenes in which she is placed. Her real father, having at last got married to the woman he loves, steps forward to claim his daughter from her foster-father. But she will not stir; she marries a peasant lad, and stays in the old place. Now, who does not see that this ending might have been varied, and quite naturally, in at least two ways? In the first place, a sort of compromise was possible under the actual circumstances of the girl's refusal and her father's clumsiness—a compromise which would have

involved no untruthfulness either among the parties, or before the world at large; and, in the second place, the father might have proceeded in a different manner. He might have gone on for a few years befriending the girl and Silas in an emphatic though not obtrusive manner; and then his child, accustomed to his presence, and moved by natural gratitude, might have received, along with her foster-father, the news of the real fatherhood in a more consenting mood. Well, if you were to try and end "Silas Marner" in either of these ways, you would be introducing (in musical phraseology) "discords," which would call for processes of "preparation" and "resolution;" and in going through those processes you would be making, in my opinion, first-rate studies for your own purpose. If you want another illustration of my meaning, take "The Mill on the Floss" of the same author, and vary the close. Instead of cutting a hard knot by killing Tom and Maggie in an inundation, try and carry out the notion which crossed Dr Kenn's mind now and then. Marry Maggie to Stephen Guest; and then consider what is to be done with Lucy Deane, Philip Wakem, and Tom Tulliver. Tom you may marry to Lucy, for obviously he is in love with her; but what will you do with poor Philip, and with Tom's relations to him? I pick

out these two novels because they are among the very best, and in some respects of unapproached excellence, and you will find that it is the *best* works of fiction which admit of the greatest variety of endings, just as true stories do.

I presume, if I were to ask you what is the one thing you have positively settled in your own mind, you would answer me, "Why, to be true to human nature." Very good, my dear, but *which* human nature? The human nature of Pericles, or the human nature of the costermonger in the street? The human nature of Aspasia, or the human nature of Mrs Gamp? Human nature means countless millions of beings, spread over the whole surface of the globe at any given moment in ten thousand ages; it takes in you and me, and the pre-historic man. If you say that the points in which men and women agree, and have always agreed, are more numerous than the points in which they differ, I answer, Probably; only that may be an open question; but if you are really going in for being true to human nature in that high sense, there is uphill work before you, unless you have broader and more commanding gifts than I am yet aware of as being possessed by you. Very easy, how-

ever, will be your task if you purpose being true to nature in the sense which is usually chosen. Judging from what I see in newspapers, and in the lower order of successful story-books, I come to conclusions such as these about human nature :—Human nature likes good eating and drinking at other people's expense ; it likes to come into possession of The Hall, and the estates, and a very large fortune ; it likes to have somebody to persecute ; it enjoys a mean revenge ; it likes to have a base property in the souls and bodies of "be-loved" objects ; it will pay almost any price to be flattered, and it is especially fond of that sort of flattery which masks itself as scolding—because then, you know, it is able to pretend to itself that it is being preached to. On the whole—if I may trust my authorities—human nature is a vulgar, sensual thing, fond of power and possession ; a coward that hushes things up, and a bully that torments the weak ; a wretched creature that would collapse if it were not for the truncheon of Policeman X to keep it moral, and the furniture shops to keep it genteel. I say, if I may trust my authorities ; but, my dear, I do not trust them. Still, they are numerous and influential ; and if you like to condescend to be true to that kind of human nature, you may be as untrue as you please

to the right thing. You may set up impossible situations, and make people deliver impossible sentences ; you may invent cant, and people will take it for Bible ; and, on the other hand, you may use the very words of Holy Scripture, and people will think you are inventing*—for the public knows nothing of the Bible ; you may pander to the vilest tastes, and people will call you moral ; you may banter great ideas out of countenance, and people will hiss the great ideas as if they were not all they had to fall back upon in the hour of trial. In a word, my dear, you may *lie like truth*. And better were it for you that a millstone were tied about your neck, and that you were cast into the depths of the sea.

I suppose you have not yet made up your mind whether you intend to belong to the school of Physical Effect or Metaphysical Effect, or to the school which aims at a cross between the two things. But, inas-

* This is fact, not hypothesis. I am in possession of instances of critical sagacity about the very words of the Bible, (one of them an instance in which an orthodox Bishop was furiously attacked by the majority of the press,) which are exactly analogous to that celebrated case in which a critic, supposing he had before him the Greek exercise of a modern writer, was painfully severe upon the grammar of—Pindar !—H. H.

much as you are going in for an intricate plot, I conjecture that you will be attaching yourself, though without intending it, to the *first* of the schools I have mentioned. I do hope, however, that you will not be *too* physical, especially in your descriptions of people's persons, dresses, houses, and furniture. Our popular novels reflect, in a striking manner, the elegant sordidness of a furnishing and dressing generation. Buhl and ormolu, walnut-wood and parqueterie, velvet and French kid, rustle and perfumery—spare us these sensuous commonplaces if you can ; and, in talking about faces and figures, let us have hints, after the manner of great masters like Thackeray, rather than vulgar full-lengths, or even busts. Scarcely any, if any, amount of genius or delicacy of touch, united with whatever literary experience, can make a detailed account of the human person anything much short of offensive. Whatever is *characteristic* in the exterior of the personages of your little drama you may mention, but the more indirectly the better.

In the matter of Crimes and Catastrophes, let me advise you, if you can, to exercise a judicious eclecticism. Read some "Cabinet Lawyer," under the titles, "Offences against Property," and "Offences against the Person." Consult, also, a file of a low

Sunday newspaper, and a few volumes of the "Newgate Calendar." If your papa or brother should decline (but I know they are both goodnatured) to help you to these sources of information, get a ticket for the Library of the British Museum. Then tabulate your crimes and your catastrophes, and make your choice. If choice should prove embarrassing, write out (say) a hundred horrors on slips of paper, shake up the slips in your riding-hat, and "draw."

This, my dear, you will perceive, is all my nonsense. Thinking I hear you say, "Oh, Mr H., don't be so satirical!" I will return to my more serious vein. Do, my girl, try and give us a story without a villain! I assure you I never saw a villain. I am bound to believe such creatures exist; but I am as sure as I am that I hold this pen that the greatest amount of real suffering in life is not produced by villany. Life is made up of two elements—an element of will, and an element of fatality. The misery which is struck out in the conflict, or rather the interaction of the two, has usually for its apparent or efficient cause the misunderstandings of people of average (and sometimes more than average) goodness. It is not some scoundrel who keeps back a title-deed, or who

prosecutes a cruel vengeance, or who wantonly abuses the privileges of affection ; it is not such a scoundrel who is at the bottom of most of the troubles of our lives. Still less is it an enemy who, having got hold of a distressing, perhaps criminal secret, works it as hard as he can to his own advantage, and somebody else's disadvantage. I entreat you to avoid that last conception ; it is hackneyed to death. If you insist on showing us some bad man who has got another under his thumb, as the phrase is, vary the idea a little. Let the poor fellow who is intended by the villain to be a victim turn round bravely, and refuse to be victimised. "I have got hold of your secret, and if you don't give me a thousand pounds a month I will go and tell." That is what the ordinary villain says. It never appears to occur to the novelist that there are men who would reply, "Go and tell if you like, but I will bribe nobody !" Yet there are such men, and I have known them.

If, however, you insist upon giving us the usual forms of villany, let me beg of you *not* to give us, by way of makeweight, the usual forms of what is called Nemesis or Retribution. The effect of wickedness in real life is, that bad and good people suffer together, and that the good, in spite of the suffering, is

victoriously beautiful. Physical laws do not stop for virtue, or love, or truth. If Regan is poisoned, Cordelia is strangled. What you have to do is to take care that the suffering of the good is not in your picture of life water spilt on sand, but that, when the black curtain drops, we feel as if we could kiss the rope that hanged Cordelia, and bind it about our loins for a girdle of duty. If you cannot manage to produce this effect, it is, perhaps, better to go in for the "poetical justice" of the vulgar; better than to content yourself by painting a canvas full of snobs, or worse than snobs, with two or three good people who come to sad ends, without triumphing over their pain, or having left so bright and strong an impression that the triumph may be dispensed with. It is in this direction that I think a very great man of our own day falls short. Here is poor old Colonel Newcome dying in the Charterhouse. I have not the least objection. I do not want people to come in for fortunes, and live happy ever after. No; but what I *do* want is, that, if good people are made to suffer, their goodness shall be so strong, so radiating, that I shall feel at the end as if wickedness (not necessarily the wicked *people*) had the worst of it. In observing real life we have the whole battle-field before us, for all time, and can check

to-day's doubt by yesterday's trust—the failure of the weak by the triumph of the strong. In reading a novel we have only a *section* of the battle-field before us; and we are entitled to require that that section, as represented, shall be true to the effect of the whole in all vital matters. If a story gives a depressing view of human history, and shows us the good people getting the worst of it, and just going off the scene “resigned,” it is false to the greatest of all truths—the truth that it is Justice which rules the world. Its literal accuracy is not its merit, but its fault—having all the effect of untruth, since other sections of the great spectacle are not and cannot be shown upon the canvas for want of space. Since, then, they cannot be so shown, let the goodness which is beaten in the section we are permitted to behold be at least a vigorous, protesting goodness. In order that it may appear to us in that light, it is better that it should have a great fault than two or three weaknesses. Nothing spoils life more, in the contemplation, than the knack of dwelling upon the small drawbacks of excellence; and nothing is more unfavourable to that respect for human character which is allied to reverence for divine things.

Let me, in continuation of the two last sections, call your attention still more closely to the question of height, as distinguished from breadth, (of manner,) in writing a story.

In the effort to be truthful in painting life as it is, a large school of novelists have latterly fallen into the terrible error of ignoring nobleness. This is the result of a blunder. It is *not* painting life as it is, but life as it appears from the dinner-table level,—a capital mistake, and a terrible one. Doubtless, looking at life from the dinner-table, or from the top of an omnibus, you may fail to see the man who would not be controlled by a villain who had a workable secret; to see the man whose small failings did not make his goodness half ridiculous; to see the man whose goodness conquered in the fight. At the head of this knife-and-fork school,—if, indeed, it were not that his greatness entitles him to a place by himself in our literature,—stands the author of the most powerful novel of modern times, “Vanity Fair.” Mr Thackeray, heading, by divine vocation, the reaction against sentimentalism, overdid his work; as is the manner of most of us, or the work would seldom, alas! be vigorously done. If anybody will read a story like Fouqué’s

“Sintram and his Companions,” and then read one of Thackeray’s, he will hardly be able to resist the temptation to analyse a little. How is it that Thackeray has never even sketched or hinted at a character like Folko, the Knight of Montfaucon? Is it through defect of vision, or through excess of it? Folko is brave, is gentle, is true; so is Colonel Newcome. But Folko is something else—he is noble. You could not conceive him being cowed by an ill-conditioned old woman, or being haughty to inferiors; or being, on the whole, beaten in the battle-field of life, and wearing no “armour against fate” but patience. In the hero, in fact, of whatever type, there is what Mr Thackeray appears to have had no conception of—a fixed basis of character and will, *never* overlaid by the circumstances that “happen” to the man, his affections, his misfortunes, his triumphs, or what not. Nothing, for a moment makes him ignoble, whatever mistakes may be his. If a meanness cross his mind, a certain half-divine self-consciousness prevents its staining his nature or shaping itself into definite suggestion. He has no afterthoughts, no double lines of motive, no confusion of intent. If his evil genius say to him, through whatever medium,

“Why, slave, ’tis in my power to hang ye!”

he replies :—

“ Very likely ;

’Tis in my power, then, to be hanged, and scorn ye ! ”

Lastly, his constructions of the conduct of others are as liberal as the air, and in all things he is ready to take the will for the deed. An illustration of the significance of this last clause is ready to your hands in the behaviour, and especially the letter (which is, however, too analytic for the occasion) of Philip Wakem to Maggie, in “ The Mill on the Floss.” It would never have occurred to Mr Thackeray to make a lover tell such a mistress that he still believed in her, always did, and always would. It would never occur to him to keep the crown on the loved one’s forehead. He would have it off,—with many sorrowful words and apologies for human frailty ; but off it would come. Maggie in his hands would have been a naughty girl, decidedly naughty ; and he would have tried to “ palliate ” matters for her by saying to any other Maggie, “ Well, and you would have done just the same ; you know you would ! ” It cannot be denied that, with all his intellectual greatness Thackeray failed to recognise the degree of moral consolidation which is possible in human character. He *does* want height ; he *does*

want depth ; his writing *does* want the purity and sweetness of the hilltop air ; and, as I think, the action of his mind is unfair. As thus :—We all remember that passage in “ The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table,” which makes six people out of two—John and Thomas. In the visible John there are three personalities—the real John, known to God only, John’s ideal John, and Thomas’s ideal John, (and so on again with Thomas, *mutatis mutandis*.) Now, the novelist cannot, of course, know any John’s real self, or any John’s ideal John ; he can only know Thomas’s John. Of course he was a wonderful Thomas, and sees Thomas’s John better than any ordinary Thomas. But the unfairness lies here : He says, “ In John there are possibilities of badness which John does not know of, and dark corners of meanness hidden from himself.” Probably ; but for the same reason—namely, that the real John is known only to the real John’s Maker—there are possibilities of greatness and goodness which are equally unknowable to both John and Thomas. It would surely be an affectation of candour to say that Thackeray is as ready in what he writes to suggest the latter order of possibilities as he is the former. It is not his fault ; it is not to be spoken of as a charge against him ; but truth must be said, and this is the

truth. It is not, assuredly, that we never get the heroic type out of this illustrious man *because* his scenery and appointments are modern and commonplace. Nothing can be more modern, nothing more commonplace, than the scenery and appointments of "The Mill on the Floss;" yet there are four characters in the book who are never for a moment made to look mean, are never betrayed into anything ignoble—Lucy, Maggie, Philip, and Stephen. I mention this merely by way of illustration, for your guidance, my dear, and not by way of depreciating a man who has long ago taken out of our hands all question about his intellectual greatness.

In referring just now specifically to intellectual greatness, it was not in the least my intention to shirk the admission of moral greatness too. On the contrary, I think Thackeray carried the man-of-the-world type as high as it could possibly be carried upon the plan of incessantly trying to magnify heart into soul. But I am of opinion that there is a type much higher; and that it is a better thing even to break down in pursuit of its realisation, than to carry the other up to any conceivable point of success. Thackeray felt instinctively that his manner of painting his best people lowered them, and had a tendency to lower human nature; he

felt instinctively that the eye, accustomed to read the small-print of sin, lost something in range, and something of the habit of looking upward to the greater possibilities of the soul. So he made matters even in his own (perfectly consistent) way. If he had taken down one of his people a peg or two, he immediately proceeded to take *you* down a peg or two :—“ This was very wrong. But *après?* Do *you* never envy your neighbour his coach and pair? his bin of '15 port?” and so on. And thus he manages to restore the equilibrium, and sets up a sort of Gospel of Good Fellowship which recognises Excellence, and worships it too; but merely as a fetish, whose very priesthood suspect it of being made of straw.

I do not mean that this was the highest mood which the man Thackeray reached in his own life, nor do I think so. But I do think it is the highest mood ever reached by his pen. And from this summit, such as it is, how easy is the descent to that sort of half-pagan “chaff” or banter to which too many of his imitators did actually let down literature,—a sort of writing which presents life as a perpetual conundrum, *and withholds the key*. That key may exist in your author's inner consciousness, or it may not,—you cannot tell; but while you are doubting, you are forced to *one*

conclusion,—namely, that life that must be lived at the level assumed in this wearisome tossing of the ball is not worth living. It is an idiot's tale, full of sound and fury, signifying bread-and-butter.

You know, my dear, the kind of writing I mean. It is not *bitterness*,—it is nothing so truthful. It is the after-dinner banter of a poor, *blasé* worldling with no soul, lounging in front of the great tragedy in an undecided frame of mind, and once in a way, when he passes a funeral in the street, talking “good.” For my part, I prefer the simple-hearted bitterness of “*Vanity Fair*” to the equivocation of weaklings who cannot rise to its magnificent heights of scorn, but who keep on *dodging* the great ideas by which we must all live if we are to live lives worth the living. This sort of chaff has two direct effects among many indirect ones. One is useful—that of keeping the correct people from thinking too much of themselves. The other is very bad—being that of making the reckless livers sceptical of goodness, and indifferent to anything but life on a decent average level. As the reckless people are ten thousand to one compared with the conscientious people, the result of all this might be guessed, and is, indeed, but too plain in the corrupted literature of the day. No individual,

no community, ever throve, or will ever thrive, on the mere gospel of good-fellowship. "Hang it, we're all alike bad; let's wink hard at each other's lives, and be jolly. Or if anybody is to be punished, everybody must be,—let's flog all round, and then be jolly again!" This will never do. We must have a fixed basis of faith,—some ethical *universale* to hold on by,—or we perish. Nor can that be found in an "Awful Will," which is only another phrase for the essentially *unmoral* conception of Fate. It is in perfect keeping with such a conception of the Highest that a writer's "good" people should be those who exemplify, almost unconsciously, the easy virtues, and who are, almost without exception, represented as being beaten in the battle of existence. You know what I mean by *beaten*, for I have already explained myself upon that subject. I do not mean put to pain by wicked people, but put to flight by them; I refer to pictures of life in which the badness is more strenuously shown than the goodness, and the general impression left upon the mind is that of an "Awful Will" as blind as fate, and not of a Triumphant Goodness. If the great themes of thought are to be touched at all, let it be strenuously. If a man has no positive opinion about vital questions, let him hold his tongue. It is not per-

mitted—never shall be permitted—to any man, under cover of charity to the mob of grovellers, to make game of the poor wayworn soldiers who hold their foreheads up. Not even of their self-complacency? No! If you can't,—and by “chaff” you cannot,—if you can't take out the threads of spiritual pride without risk of unravelling the whole texture of what is strenuous and true to ideas, leave it alone. We have no thanks for the man who unmasks a thousand hypocrites, if he at the same time seems to take the crown of “spiritual fire” from the head of a single hero.

You will do me the justice to believe that I do not at all recommend to you the *didactic* model. I vehemently condemn it, and trust your novel will be truly *dramatic*. By this, I do not intend to confine you to dramatic *movement* in your narrative; you may most innocently adopt either the epic or dramatic manner of telling a story. In my view, a tale is dramatic, instead of epic, when the total action lies within a swiftly-returning curve, and when the subordinate activities of it are subject each to a similar law. You might carry on “Tom Jones” almost indefinitely, because the story is epic or processional; but you could not very well

serve the story of "Hamlet" like that. There is from the first a certain bounded game to be played out, and the pieces confront one another upon the board in attitudes which *promise* rapid "situations."

But again, you are not here invited to adopt the ordinary stage view of life, in which there is little exhibition of wrong except as personal injury. What the stage demands is, of course, action, promptly sweeping round from its aphelion point; and in this sense the ordinary drama may be said to be *unmoral*, for it has no room for conscience apart from personal relations. But no kind of writing is admissible which does not either imply that the Good is the Victor, or, at the lowest, leave that implication possible. Dramatic writing, which simply ignores the problem, may rise to at least a height which may prevent our feeling the want of strictly ethical elements of conception. It is the nature of all passion to give the individual an *ekstasis*, or standing-point outside himself. And, so read, passion is Fate. Now, the pagan conception will never permanently satisfy the modern mind; but, so long as cynicism be escaped, it may be worked out with a power which shall keep the mind fully inflated while the spell is on. The moment, however, you yourself play Chorus in such writing, and start such little ban-

tering conundrums as I have just been referring to, that moment you go beyond *ignoring*, and become not simply *unmoral*, but *immoral*. It is not, then, *leaving alone* the question of a Soul of Goodness in things Evil—it is *provoking* it; and, *in proportion to the extent to which Evil conquers in your story, it is answering it on the side of Hell*.

The highest art is that in which Passion plays Fate, but the Soul of Goodness conquers the Chaos, and creates the Light. This kind of art, my dear, I expect you to aim at; and, in doing so, I wish you to be truly dramatic in the sense of not taking sides upon any questions of opinion, or of conventional ethics. Many of the great questions of morals are more or less open questions; and, in any case, you must mind and give fair play to every man's and every woman's reading of duty. Fortunately *the great critical authorities are absolutely unanimous on this point*,—namely, that a novel of opinion is an act of injustice, and cannot do anything but harm. All wrong does harm; and a storyteller does a wrong to the reader if he makes the assumption of a particular point of view necessary for continuous enjoyment. A story is not the place for opinions at all; much less for opinions without reasons; least of all for opinions *saturating*

the whole work, so that you cannot escape their flavour. Nothing, not even the most earnest purpose, can make didactic narrative dignified or truthful as art. The difficulty is, no doubt, great of writing in such a manner that no cloud of imperfect mutual intelligence shall lie between writer and reader; but it must be surmounted. It is hard so to *live* that others shall not have vicariously to assume any part of our ideals of life; it is hard so to write. But the thing is to be done. George Eliot has done it to absolute perfection; not Shakespeare's self is more impartial. In Dinah Morris we had the Arminian-Evangelical type; in Mr Tryan, the Calvinist-Evangelical type; in Dr Kenn, the High-Church type; there are others besides; and while every one is lovable and venerable, nobody can say the author is of this, that, or the other opinion. I will insist, to the last drop of my critical ink, that that, and that alone, is true art, and alone fair as between writer and reader.

I happen to have before me an able essay in which the didactic novel is justified, or at least defended. "There is," says my author, "an immense reading public who like stories of this kind better than any other, and to whom the introduction into a novel of the controversies which they see outside of it is like

‘thickening’ in soup or gravy; it gives them something tangible which their intellectual palate can lay hold of. Such being the case, the didactic novel being thus acceptable to the multitude, it is clear that the writer of such fictions wields a potent instrument for good or evil, and has it in his power, in proportion to his ability, indefinitely to affect men’s views on the most serious questions of the day.” Yes, that *is* very clear. The didactic novel is a powerful instrument. But so is bribery, or persecution. And every argument against either applies against the didactic novel OF OPINION. Let opinions be supported by reasons—not by inducements.

It is all very well to say that if you do not like such novels, you can leave them alone. But, suppose you like the novelist for qualities independent of his opinions? It is then as if you visited a teetotal friend because you loved him, and he took advantage of your friendship to make you drink cold water; or a Roman Catholic friend who forbade you crossing his door-mat till you had crossed yourself also from a holy-water pan let into the wall. This *unkindness*, however, is quite subordinate to the *injustice*, which lies in the fact that an opinion is matter of argument—not of persuasion. I once heard some intelligent reading people maintain

that Carlyle was a Presbyterian. Their meaning was, not that Carlyle had anywhere expressed his faith in any formula of that creed, but that *they could not conceive that he could be anything else*. Now, this mistake arose out of their littleness and Carlyle's greatness; but you see Carlyle had not done them any injustice, for they could and did accept this phraseology as *representing* their own opinions. Carlyle is as impartial as the skies or the winds in the phraseology he employs. Having, with much self-denial and labour of soul—labour incurred because he was resolved to be *true to others* as well as to his own opinions,—having thus succeeded in running up the lowest forms in which truth is received to their highest forms, he is able to use an all-embracing terminology in which nobody is wronged. A similar criticism would apply to Tennyson,—perhaps hardly to any very great writer of modern times but these three,—Tennyson, Carlyle, George Eliot. I repeat that, unless it be distinctly understood that you mean to keep on a particular level of expression, (in which case the general reader is simply warned off,) an act of injustice is committed in writing, calling itself dramatic, when *any* scheme of life or doctrine is presupposed. It is the business of Art to assume nothing but first pos-

tulates of opinion and duty. To acquire the power of doing this perfectly is a matter of enormous labour; but some instinct or other appears to guide a few writers *towards* it from the first, while others go the contrary way. Either choice may, perhaps, be innocent; only let us see our path. It is in writers of the Evangelical school that we find the mistake, or rather injustice I refer to, most rampant; but it may be found elsewhere. Robert Owen was an example. If his perpetual taking for granted that you agreed with him had not been so lugubriously unconscious, it would have been as offensive as the tract* which was thrust into my hands yesterday afternoon. Briefly, here is the whole case:—If you write an essay, you may express any opinion you please. Stigmatise mine, and I don't care; because I can, in turn, stigmatise yours if I so choose. But if you write a story or a poem, what I expect is that, whatever you make your *people* say, you should never take sides yourself, directly or *indirectly*. You and I are both, in dramatic writing, spectators, and nothing else.

* This tract quoted upwards of twenty texts,—with the interpretation of every one of which I disagreed, and disagreed in company with the biggest brains in Christendom.—H. H.

On the subject of style, you will permit me to commend to you a sincere simplicity. I say a *sincere* simplicity, because we have had of late too many examples of an affected sort of realism which is produced by using short, common words in a tah-tah way, and suggesting the latest commonplaces on duty with a severe, one-syllable air, as if long words were not worth while, considering what a bad sort of business existence turns out to be. It is very easily imitated : —“ This is a story of a proud man who wanted his own way. He had not yet learned that it is the duty of man to bear pain without trying to be rid of it. He wished for happiness ; but life was too strong for him, and he did not get it.” This sort of thing is commonly illustrated by a drawing in which the figures are ten feet high. There are seldom more than two of them ; and, perhaps, one says to the other, according to the legend underneath the picture, “ Sir, will you have some beef ? ” or, “ John, here is your hat.”

This style finds admirers ; but that is not the kind of simplicity to which I invite you. What is here proposed for your adoption is that honest simplicity which does *nothing* for effect ; neither coquettes with the big words nor the small words, but writes on truthfully,

and without self-consciousness. Real simplicity of manner is a great power when the writer is otherwise worthy to be listened to. It will hardly do to tell you to cultivate a simple style; but, negatively, you may reject parasitical matters as fast as they occur to you when writing, and in that way make it easier for your subject to take that entire possession of your mind which is so needful for simplicity. After all, however, this is chiefly a question of conscientious self-discipline in a quite other than literary direction.

I need not say I would sternly insist upon your shunning commonplace. By commonplace I do not mean the simply familiar, but the conventional. It is not commonplace when Lear says, "Pr'ythee undo this button;" or, "I am a very foolish, fond old man;" though nothing can be more ordinary than the words. But it *is* commonplace when an author, in describing one of his characters, says, "Beneath his somewhat rough exterior, there beat a heart as warm and true as ever dwelt in human breast." Nor would the passage be redeemed from conventionalism—indeed, it would be made worse—by the use of longer words, as thus:—"Concealed in the uttermost recesses of his moral being, sheltering far, far down, remote from the

observation of the superficial eye, and throbbing under an exterior which, it must be confessed, could not with success hope to vindicate itself from the charge of ruggedness, there dwelt a heart as cordial and as full of a noble veracity as ever beat in the bosom of our common nature." This is, of course, detestable, though it is scarcely a burlesque of what is often taken for "good writing." You may escape conventionalisms *by taking trouble—not otherwise*. The first requisite is fearless precision of conception, and then we want an equally fearless precision of description. One great source of this kind of commonplace is, perhaps, the use of abstract phrases instead of concrete ones, or at least vague words for distinct words. What is "a somewhat rough exterior?" Your business is to *show* us the roughness—not to tell us of it; and you cannot do that by mere generalisations. One single living trait of the kindness and the roughness combined would have been worth a whole chapterful of mere assertion. Another source is the lazy adoption of current phrases and "tags." There is always a whole literature of these afloat,—that expression about the kind heart under the rough exterior is an example. Another sort of commonplace is imitative mannerism

under which head I have said something to Augustus,* who is, I regret to find, about to become a reviewer.

Let me earnestly dissuade you from writing a novel of the *detective* order. A long sensation story, whose movement is carried forward stage after stage, puzzle after puzzle, in the manner of a detective officer playing the novelist, is very likely to become unpleasant reading, and to leave on the mind, even of any one who has been entertained by it, a strong emotion of disgust. It *must* do so if it makes its way for any length of time among the domesticities, hovering about people's persons, clothes, downsittings, and uprisings; dealing now with a dose of physic, now with an alpaca dress, now with the expression of a lady's face just after a visit to her physician, now with a poor girl's talk over the fire with a servant-maid, now with a family chat over the breakfast-table, and so on. I have said, carefully guarding my words, "a *long* sensation story, told in the manner of a *detective* playing the *novelist*." A short tale like Edgar Poe's "Purloined Letter," or "Murder in the Rue Morgue," may

be inoffensively exciting. In those instances the effects are wrought out by (what I will call) the detective genius worming its way through details mainly physical, and, if not wholly impersonal, yet quite detached from all associations of conscience and tender emotion. Perhaps a *short* tale of the "detective" order might be inoffensively related, even if it did not fulfil the condition last suggested. But never a long one. In the case of a long story, the ground to be traversed is too great for the inquisitorial fancy not to blunder sometimes. Perhaps another metaphor may help us. The novelist may, without offence, play for us a short game of hunt the slipper, even among the domesticities, as an amusement or as an intellectual exercise. The thing will pass. But he must not keep up the chase in the sick-room, or in the conjugal council, or in view of the struggle of conscience. If he does, he degrades himself and his reader. People of sense and sensibility may read on, and may be thrilled as they read; but when the book is closed, they will feel ashamed of themselves—as if the intimacies of life had been fingered and pottered over in an ignominious manner with their consent, and in their presence. If their impressions were rendered into language, the result would be something like this:—There is an inevitable law of

antagonism between the mood in which a mystery may be pursued through a thousand windings of personal detail, and the mood in which broad emotional effects may be produced. All the art in the world cannot remove that antagonism. You look through a *trou-de-Judas*, and tell us you saw one woman cut off a piece of another woman's flounce. Very good. You look again, and see a sick girl take her physic. *That* may pass; but we begin rather to resent it when you attempt to describe her reflections about the kind hand that held the cup. You're a little off your beat, we fancy. And so on, through cases much stronger, we feel, with an unpleasant creepiness, that you're carrying a small, prying, familiar, arithmetical, physical (in a word) "detective" mood into places where another mood is imperatively demanded. You are glad to be amused, and to see the ingenious novelist hide something, and find it himself; but, in hunting for what he has concealed, he must not go ferreting, and fumbling, and nosing about hither and thither among those intimate details of life which, by a thousand associations of love, trust, and gracious reticence, are made sacred to us all. Let the clever conjuror turn out his own pockets, and shake his own hat, and unscrew his own handkerchief to glorify his acuteness; but we shall not

allow him to degrade our daily lives for us by fingering the folds of the bed-curtains, and looking under the table, snipping at the flounces of our sisters' dresses, and peering into the rims of our daughters' eyes.

Well, my dear, that is a fatiguing outburst of indignation; and probably you also are tired. This is already too long a letter, and I will not keep you many minutes more. But let me beg you to notice, for your own guidance, how tastes have altered, and do alter, in matters of literature under our very eyes. The world has undergone great changes in its notions as to what makes a readable story. There are people now-a-days who read "Frankenstein," and "Thaddeus of Warsaw," and "The Hungarian Brothers," though not many. Books like "The Children of the Abbey," by Regina Maria Roche, have been exposed in decent shop-windows within my own recollection; and "The Old English Baron," "The Castle of Otranto," and "Evelina," are still to be found in cheap issues of the class which includes "Culpepper's Herbal," and "Drelincourt on Death." But who would, at the present time, dare to think of writing a "story" like that of "Hudibras" for any work of fancy whatsoever? Who

would dare to write and print books like the “Herm-sprong” of Robert Bage, (the Quaker papermaker, and friend of Hutton of Birmingham,) or like the “Sorrows of Werter?” How they would be laughed at if printed! and how Mr Mudie would not subscribe to them, though he takes a great many much worse books! In point of fact, although fashion alone cannot give a book a firm hold of the general mind, yet it may very well prevent a good book, whose manner is not in the fashion, being so far received as to make a favourable impression. Once admitted as your guest, a man might make you like him, whom nevertheless your servant would not announce without a giggle behind his back, even if he announced him at all and did not turn him away.

These things, and others of the same kind, are just as well remembered, if only as a check upon the arrogance of our criticisms. The history of the fortunes of works of art is full of anomalies. Herrick and George Herbert have probably a much larger appreciative public than they had in their own days; and the number of people who admire Dryden (more or less intelligently) is, perhaps, quite as great as that of the public who admired him living. But if a writer, with all Dryden's power, were now to arise and issue a

volume of poems in the heroic couplet, what chance would the book stand? Unless, indeed, it bore some leading publisher's name on the titlepage, and were nursed into its first publicity by friends who knew a thing or two. Otherwise, one might as well try to revive the "Rival Queens" at Covent Garden, or bring out the "Grand Cyrus" in shilling monthly parts.

The conditions of successful story-writing may seem to be very simple, but they have really grown into very serious complexity. We have now an enormous public of well educated, but exceedingly commonplace people, who create the demand for novels, and actually rule the market. In real, downright quality of mind, these people are just about the same as those who, twenty years ago, were reading "Ada the Betrayed," and "The Bronze Statue, or the Virgin's Kiss;" while in superficial taste and ostensible culture they are greatly superior. Hence the demand for what is called the sensation novel, which, it has been rightly enough said, is nothing new. What the best critics of all classes complain of, is not strong interest, strong passion, or tragic incident, though it has been attempted to divert the discussion to that issue. No; what they quarrel with is the lowness of the level on which the great passions are played off against each other, and

the vulgar quality of the light in which men's and women's minds are shown to us. And this is a fair ground of complaint, even if there were no other.

However, not to return to that topic, let me, before I close, call your attention to a charming passage in the Preface to "The Virgin Widow" of Mr Henry Taylor, the author of "Philip Van Artevelde." He says :—

"In no works are the pleasantries of wisdom more bright and abundant, than in the comedy of the Elizabethan age. I wish it were possible, not, indeed, to repeat that comedy, but to renew the spirit which gave birth to it. Fictions are written in these days often with great power and ability, but to me they seem powerful only to give pain. Our writers of fiction would appear to despair of getting an answer from the popular imagination in any other way than by breaking it on the wheel. I well know that in times of rapid movement light pressures are not easily felt; but I venture to believe that, here and there in the recesses of society, there may be found persons who, like myself, do not desire to be *harrowed*, and are better pleased to be taken amongst the amenities of fiction, than amongst its glooms and terrors."

I quote these beautiful words, (recommending the

whole Preface to your attention,) because I want to finish by saying, that I would gladly see you attempt to reinforce the ranks of the storytellers who do not aim at harrowing effects so much as at pleasing ones.

And so, my dear, *va con Dios!*—and be sure to send me an early copy of your novel.

XIV.

TO A YOUNG MAN ABOUT TO BECOME A CRITIC.

YOU are going to be a critic? Dear boy, accept my commiseration. I would as soon hear that you had taken the Queen's shilling, and gone for a soldier. However, since you are bent upon self-destruction, I propose to assist you with my—advice. Bless you, my child, bless you!

In speaking of self-destruction, I am contemplating the effect which the incessant writing of criticisms has upon original faculty of any and every kind, except the pure critical: which is very rare. To criticise is simply to judge; and no man of genius can be an artist in his own line without being capable of criticism. But to be always writing criticisms is, except in very rare cases, a most wearisome, injurious occupation. How tired you get of thrashing the same old husks over and over again! How sick of the sight of books! How repulsive the mere task of reading

becomes ! Your duty, as a critic, is to cut open the bellows, and see where the wind comes from. But, in the enormous, the incalculable majority of cases, there is *no* wind. You know beforehand that there is no wind. Now, do you think you can go on, year after year, cutting the bellows open in search of nothing at all, and yet escape self-destruction ? I tell you nay. Out of nothing, nothing can come. Is there no wind in the bellows ? There will be none in your criticisms. Half the books that come before a critic are not worth criticising,—they are nothing, one way or the other. If left to yourself, you would pass them by, like the people in the street. You do not want to know them, and examine their hats and bonnets ; you do not wish them any harm ; and you do not make faces at them. Well, if your mind is left to its own natural free play, you pass lightly over the commonplaces of humanity, and pause upon the notabilia. When you thus pause, you find the notabilia suggestive,—you have something to say about them,—you feel that there *is* wind in the bellows you are going to cut open,—and the task proves interesting and instructive to others as well as yourself. But, just suppose yourself forced to scrutinise all the people in the streets, and say something decently clever about them—what degradation and

despair are yours! You count their very buttons—first forwards and then backwards, in hope that, like Druid stones, they may add up differently the second time of asking. You pry; you fidget; you turn them over; you pull them about. You ask, with Solomon, Is there any taste in the white of an egg? Is there anything to criticise in that which has no qualities? By degrees, straining your eyes to see what is invisible, you injure the organ, and discern that your own originality has thinned away, whilst you have been trying to find out other people's. You may lighten your labours a little, perhaps, by remembering that clever things are not always necessary, *even* in a review! One great benefit of literary experience is, that you acquire the courage to utter commonplaces, and it is astonishing how they go down.

All the while, too, you cannot fail to be occasionally in the wrong. You *must* injure other people as well as yourself. Sometimes you will give false, foolish, and most mischievous praise. Sometimes, blame as mischievous. There was a visitor to one of our old schools—I think St Paul's—in the old days, who saw a boy flogged without apparent provocation, and asked the master—was it Udall?—what the boy had done. “Sir,” said the master, “he hath done nought deserv-

ing of chastisement ; but this is to make him humble." Even if you should never do anything as ridiculous as that, it will inevitably happen that you say things to be sorry for about the books and people you criticise. I must confess, that I think with frequent anguish, with shame and confusion of face, of criticisms for which I have been loudly praised. Even at the moment of writing them, my pen has paused, as the silent monitor put the question—*Is that true, or is it only half-true, and rather clever?* But there is no time for consideration. Off go the doubtful words, and you, the critic, get your guinea, and your remorse.

For my own part, I have always endeavoured to confine myself, as much as possible, to exposition of my author. This is not so difficult when the author has anything to be expounded : has a character, or quality of his own, a ruling idea, a striking manner ; or represents a movement, a party, or a principle. It is when your author has nothing particular in him that you are posed, and feel the horrible temptation to be "clever" against time. I can truly say that I have not often yielded to this temptation, and that my habit is carefully to guard my words. But even *that* goes for little. People don't notice fine grada-

tions of approval or dissidence. Nothing disgusts mankind so much as equity that turns upon distinctions they had not thought of themselves.

The shortness of the *time* allowed (allowed from the necessities of journalism) for a great deal of a reviewer's work is, to an honest mind, a very distressing part of the case. I should like, myself, to edit the "Deliberate Review and Criticus Criticorum;" or, "Philip Sober coming down upon Philip Drunk." But who will start such a review? Who will pay me for the labour which such criticism as I contemplate would involve? For I contend that a book which is worth reviewing at all should not be reviewed until after the critic had read it, feasting and fasting; aloud and to himself; at home and abroad; and, on the whole, six times at the very least. The result of this might be half a page of writing; and what scale of payment would meet the difficulty thus arising? Suppose I receive twenty pounds for a quarterly review article about a book, an article which fills twenty pages, is the editor to award me twenty pounds for another review in which I condense a week's thinking into an epigram of a line and a half? I should like to see an enlightened British jury trying a question of literary *quality*. It would be edifying.

One of the difficulties which beset the casual reviewer is, that of distinguishing between a book which is a work of art, and a book which is only a clever idea worked up. This is very much a question of time,—at least until a man has got so far beyond the range of ordinary criticism that he does not care to write it. When a critic, by assiduous study and self-culture, with much scrutiny of the very highest models, has so trained his faculty of perception that he can tell almost at a glance what a book is worth, he has, in all probability, got to such a pass that he hates all reading of matter which his mind cannot at once assimilate and make good muscle of. But until this point be reached he is liable to be deceived by “clever” writing, and is not quite ready in distinguishing “clever” things from works of art. This is especially the case with the editorial or periodical critic. For the whole attitude of the journalistic mind contemplates immediate *effect*. Now, the first effect of a work of genius is very often—perhaps, one may say, generally—disappointing. I think a great deal more of Gray’s “Elegy” than I did ten years ago; and I cannot even read, or bear to recall, the verses of Edgar Poe. Yet Poe’s “Raven” would instantly be accepted by a magazine, and instantly

praised by a large number of newspaper critics ; while Gray's "Elegy," or even Campbell's quieter pieces, would knock in vain at the door of the editor's room.

A good idea, cleverly wrought up, is sure of immediate reception. One reason is, that the habit of the clever mind, the mind that is apt to have "good ideas," is one that *looks* to effect ; and another, that the level of the clever, working brain is just that which permits it to use, without restraint, the current turns of thought and phrase. At the present time an enormous quantity of even our "good" literature is mosaic. You can very easily sit down and pick out solid lumps of phraseology, which are Tennyson, or Dickens, or Carlyle, or Thackeray ; and the fun is, that if the same ideas had been expressed in simple, independent language, they would not have been recognised. I have over and over again verified this, and can now at a glance tell what I call the "good-literature" style of composition. It is not unpleasant, and it serves a purpose. All I say is, that perpetual familiarity with it spoils the palate of the literary taster, and is decidedly apt to make him think too lightly of the very best intellectual products. Mr Matthew Arnold has, among others, shown a keen sense of the truth of this, and, not to mention names,

the best critics are everywhere with me upon the subject in question.

One of your chief trials as a critic will be poetry. Here and there you have a critic who knows poetry almost as soon as he looks at it; but we are all liable to be taken in. You see this is such a *literary* generation, people are "so confoundedly well read," as Goethe says—

"Allein sie haben shrecklich viel gelesen,"—

and a good memory and good workmanship go a long way. Not only is your "poet" well read; your critic is well read also. And who can remember everything? Writing a review in haste, you speak warmly of a new volume of verse. Your excuse is the presence of a little music of the writer's own, and a number of solid, fine lines occurring throughout the book here and there. You have, probably, some little doubt whether you are right or not, but you give the young author the benefit of that doubt, and say he has the making of a poet in him. The very next morning, as you wake in bed, it flashes across your mind that you have seen half-a-dozen of the poet's good things before. Upon examination, the half-dozen swell to half a hun-

dred. Now, take out fifty fine lines from a small book of poetry, and how much remains? It is not easy to say! There is the workmanship, and there is the melody, at all events, and you may comfort yourself with the hope that the young poet will not be so ready at reminiscence when he is a little older.

But, in the meanwhile, you run the risk of allowing your vitiated palate—palate vitiated by incessant familiarity with current mannerisms—to lead you into injustice to others. There are poets, and prose writers also, who have so sternly truthful a self-consciousness that they are rarely betrayed into reminiscence, and never into imitative mannerism. These you may wrong, because their style will at first sight appear to lack “power.”

There is still another danger, but that is of such rare occurrence that I need *hardly* mention it. It is a fact, however, that a great poet is very often a literary innovator as well, and you may pass such a one over because you do not see anything in a manner which is new to you. Wordsworth and Tennyson have both been mighty innovators in the mere matter of style; the Tennysonian manner tyrannises already; makes us apt to be unjust to poetry which will not take the mould.

This is not the fault of Tennyson's strength ; it is the fault of our weakness.

It is impossible to guide you in distinguishing true works of art from merely "clever" or "good" things. But, generally speaking, a work of genius takes much longer to understand and fall in love with than a very clever work of any kind. The first effect is often disappointing ; and you are irritated, perhaps, by not being able to find any fault with it, except that it seems to want "power." With great truth it has been said that a poem is like a violin—you must get familiar with it to know what music it contains. The same rule applies to good prose ; though, of course, the force of the application weakens as the material and the workmanship grow less fine.

One of the greatest obstacles to just criticism lies in the warping effect of personal predilection. I do not mean predilection for persons, but individual taste or opinion—idiosyncrasy. This, you will declare, is a very obvious remark ; but, pray, permit me to press it a little. See how it applies to poetry. Some people cannot understand the *sublime* at all—that is a very common defect in these days—but they have a very keen sense of the picturesque, and of analogies between human

feeling and the aspects of nature. These people will perfectly understand poetry which makes pictures in their minds by recalling familiar objects, and associating those objects with emotion ; but they will not willingly follow what Coleridge has called an *active* imagination. There are, thus, thousands of cultivated people who love Tennyson, and yet can't make much of Wordsworth, or the best parts of Milton. How many, how very many, to whom the "strong wine" of Shelley's poetry is absolutely without savour ! He is too intense for them ! I protest to you, I find few things more irritating than this want of catholic taste in art. Everybody runs after the writer of his own tastes and leanings, and will see nothing in the rest. This is only proclaiming the defects of one's own mind. What I say to those who differ from me in my appreciations is this :—I may, of course, be wrong, but the presumption is that I am right, for my circle includes yours, while yours does not include mine. You admit that I see all that *you* see in your Tennyson,—why can't you have the patience to look again and again at my Wordsworth, or my Shelley ?

The same kind of remark applies, of course, to prose writing. There are very few critics who can judge a book *in vacuo*—entirely apart from their own tastes

in life and art. There are people whom you can utterly impose upon by merely working a given vein upon a given level. Appeal to their own private experience; touch them upon the points that lie uppermost in their minds; do not be *too* intelligent, and you may do almost anything you please with them. It is a sad fault to be too knowing. People resent it as they do a clear, judging eye; which is an offence, however you may strive to mask it with gentleness and respect.

I really do not feel certain that all this will be of much use to you; because, upon looking calmly back, I remember what I once was myself, and how long a time it has taken me to grow into what I call a catholic habit of mind; and yet a few words more upon this subject may help you. We cannot communicate experience to each other, any more than we can exchange convictions; but if we do our best to put others at our own point of view, the labour may not be quite wasted. They may pick up hints of meaning here and there. The eye can only see what it brings with it, but it may be helped to bring its best.

In order to know what an author really means, which is a necessary, though a neglected, preliminary to criticism of what he says, you must know something of intellectual *dialects*. Even if the *language* of

thought were the same with all men, (which it cannot be, for language is the creature of character and experience, which are special and private,) there would still remain the finer lights and shades of dialect. The effects of these may be wholly missed by a very good, sensible, plodding critic ; nay, by a critic who has much talent. It is quite a usual thing to see a review in which a really fair critical authority abuses some writer for what he says, quotes his words, and then proceeds to say the very same thing in *different* words, wholly unconscious that he is only repeating. This, you see, is because the critic cannot *translate*. Every writer has his own peculiar manner of speech, his own symbols, his own level of experience and culture, and a little patience is often necessary in order to make sure of his meaning, even when he seems to be plainest. The best rule I can give you is this—When a writer, otherwise intelligent, appears to be saying something which gives you a very good opportunity of coming down upon him, be sure to look twice at what he *does* say. It is quite possible the poor man is not such a fool as he looks.

Perhaps one might illustrate this *translating* faculty by referring, as something analogous, to the faculty, which a very few persons appear to possess, of tracing

a family resemblance through a great many highly differentiated specimens. This is a rare power. Most people are puzzled to recognise in a full-face portrait the face they knew at once in profile, or half-profile; and so it is among critics. They do not know the profile of an idea.

Besides the difficulty there often is in making out the meaning of different parts of a book, there is the difficulty, quite as frequent perhaps, of making out the whole design. How common is it for a critic to exclaim, with supercilious hastiness, that he cannot make out what a writer is driving at, that *this* is obscure, and *that* is vague, and the other is doubtful, when all the while the vagueness of the general result was either a part of the author's plan, or a necessary foreseen result of conditions which it was not in the author's power to remove. A man may be vague because he feels that "if he comes out of the cloud he will be committed to the flames." Or he may speak in haste, because it is, he knows, his only chance of speech, and he fancies it is his duty to say the thing that is in him. It is true that, in these cases, the world's comment, "Vague!" may be a fair stroke in the great battle; and the author may even have contemplated it and provided for it; he may have foreseen

that you, the critic, would find him vague, may have quite deliberately bothered you ;—so that the criticism is fair; but it is one thing to remark upon an effect as intended or possibly intended, and another to treat it as a mere crude fault.

One mistake which it seems to me critics are very apt to make is, that of *judging a book off-hand by the canons applicable to the sort of book which it appears most to resemble*; to judge a book which contains story, for example, by the conditions of the novel or romance. But this is being misled by words. The book before you is—what it is—it is an intellectual product all by itself. Your business, permit me to say, is to judge it as if it were the first book that ever was printed, unless it puts itself, by its own pretensions, within some specifiable category of literature! It would be very absurd to criticise the “Pickwick Papers” by the canons of the novel. You might waste a volume in doing so, and when all was done, you might be stultified by the simple answer—My good sir, who *said* it was a novel? The “Pickwick Papers” constitute—the “Pickwick Papers.” There the book lies, all by itself, pretending to be just what it is. Take it or leave it, but do not condemn it because it is not what it never pretended to be.

On the whole, I think your greatest danger as a critic will be that into which the majority, both of critical and uncritical readers, so readily fall, namely, that of allowing your own personal likings to lead you into false judgments of books. Not only are we liable to think too highly of books which repeat our own ideas, or emphasise the half-formed generalisations of our own minds from our own experience; not only is that so, for there is this additional danger, that we may underrate the merits of books which are beyond our range, although they may not appear so. Remarks, alas! which, when I first became a critic, I should have passed over as of no moment, have at the present time the greatest weight with me. I would rather not furnish examples of what I mean; but I could easily do so, believe me.

Just one word about Ridicule and Invective in criticism. Feeling has two sides—one humorous, the other pathetic; and in order to stimulate it into vivid activity when “overlaid,” you may most mercifully sting it with the whip, or tickle it with a feather. It is the accredited “practice” in cases of “suspended animation.” It simply amounts to putting strong cases, the suggestion of which flashes light into dark

corners of the mind. Therefore it is occasionally allowable and useful; but, pray, be guarded in employing it.

You will perceive that, in all seriousness, I think the conditions of ordinary periodical criticism so unfavourable, that I discommend, rather than commend, to you the career upon which you have entered, and that upon moral grounds, supposing you to love the truth. But you may do something to make your office respectable in the eyes of Heaven, by taking pains, and devoting especial care to the one point of endeavouring to place your mind *in vacuo* before you attempt to judge your author. If the book be a book of opinion, how unfair for you to say the writer of it is a bad thinker because he does not think as you do! Yet metaphysical and philosophical writers fling epithets at each other in their criticisms without even decent reserves. In all open questions, when you express an opinion, say something equivalent to "I think," or let the attitude of your article express as much. Never give opinions without reasons, unless you, at least, apologise for the rudeness of doing so. Again, and lastly, see that your praise is not patronage. Too much of what passes for favourable reviewing is, to my mind, simple

insult. The most vehement praise that can be given—and I wish you to be a good warm praiser—may always be given in print with the same modesty as would be proper if it were spoken. I hope, dear boy, you will endeavour so to praise ; but I regret to inform you, your only reward will be in your own consciousness, and in the good opinions of a very few. I take for granted, however, that you mean to make your literary life “a battle and a march,” and to try to be a good critic in precisely the same sense as that in which you try to be a good man.

It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to add that when I spoke of the reviewing habit of mind being unfavourable to originality, I did not necessarily use that last word in any strong or high sense. All sincere intelligence may be said to be capable of original productions, and insincere work must damage it. That is all.

Intermediate Words by the Editor.

THE reader who has had the patience to come as far as the page now open before him, will have discerned that these papers of Mr Holbeach are very much in the nature of soliloquies, whatever form they take. The writing is, almost always, in substance, an endeavour, in the shape of "irrespective criticism," to clear the writer's own mind. It is saying, "This is how it strikes *me*, and I shall be glad to know how it strikes *you*." Whether this is a useful policy or not, each must judge for himself. That my friend *thought* it was useful is certain, otherwise he would not have handed to me the key of his desk ; a thing which, I feel sure, cost him considerable pain, in spite of the jaunty air with which he did it.

I have already said that I will, at the end of the Discussions, with the assistance of a memorandum or two placed at my disposal, summarise the whole as well as I can ; but, meanwhile, I find some annotations

of my friend's upon the Studies which precede; and they may properly enough be inserted here, both as looking back to these Studies, and as looking forward to the Letters.

I. *Dinner and Small Motives of Action.*—I am not insensible to a sort of comment which may be applied to such language as has fallen from me upon these and kindred topics. "Every man has his price. Your Andrew Marvell may not care for good dinners, but there is something else, if we only knew it, which he does care for; which would be his 'price;' and which stands related to his type just as a meaner thing stands related to another." In answer to this, or any criticism to similar effect, it is only needful to say that candid minds are even too apt to torment themselves with casuistries, and that when the worst is said, it will remain true that

"There is a lower and a higher."

No doubt every human creature has his besetting sin; and few of us are so happy as not to have found out, each for himself, his own. And not at my door, certainly, is to be laid the charge of teaching that any

one type is entitled to "improve off the face of the earth" any other type.

But I vehemently oppose the insinuation that a man *must* fall down to some false god or other once in the course of his life. Retrospectively, we may have to say, every man has done so ; in prospect, it is probable any given man will do so. But no man is under a necessity to do wrong ; and this dangerous talk grates on the ears of the ninety and nine who, as yet, need no repentance ; while it tends to corrupt the one man, "which is a sinner," but not necessarily yet corrupted. To him the divine message would be to set his future hopes, not by his fall, as if it were a commonplace, but by the height from which he fell :—

" Grieve on ; but if thou grieveest right,
 'Tis not that these abhor thy state,
Nor wouldst thou lower, the least, the height
Which makes thy casting down so great."

Thus, then, if one of my fellow-creatures of a high type discloses, by falling before a refined temptation, the fact that he, too, has his "price," I quite understand that his remorse may be as keen as that of an inferior person who accepts an inferior bribe ; but my estimate of the two people is not in the least altered,

nor am I to be sophisticated into the belief that effort in the light of ideals is useless, and a lofty conscience an absurdity.

II. *Love of Power*.—To this I have said, with some passion, that I am a stranger, and that, in my opinion, all the ends of life might be fulfilled without mutual exaction masked by civility. But it must not be supposed that I am blind to the good *consequences* which are brought out of the instinct of leadership, or am so foolish as to think that the majority of the men in whom the instinct is strong feel their consciences burdened with what it makes them do. I hope I quite understand that there is such a thing as a generous superiority; and also that there is such a thing as a hard, bold, selfish impatience of concerted action under the guidance of such superiority. But I cannot disavow my conviction that the great curse of life is the abuse of power, from a brutal instinct in those who possess the power. It is a thing to make one cry out,—How long, O Lord, how long? It is beyond my fortitude to keep back the contemptuous word, when solemn idiots dispense on those who are, unhappily, placed under them cruelties or indignities, in the name of justice. You may see this base, mean love of power in the boy who teases his playmate, only because he

wants, by so teasing him, to assert himself; in the petty pomposities of even kind and good parents; in the pride which employers and others take in maintaining against inferiors bargains which might just as well be relaxed; in the stupid insolences of magistrates, and *voluntary prosecutors*; in the ridiculous resentment which nearly everybody shows at the departure of an adherent or a dependent; in claims which are constantly asserted in the name of love or duty; and everywhere it is the same utterly base and disgusting brute instinct. The worst stories of vice and crime do not come so near to making me despair of human nature as, for example, the sentences which clerical and other magistrates, (but the clergymen are generally the most cruel and unjust,) in the name of goodness and right,* pass upon small offenders. When I read that a child has been condemned to six months' imprisonment for stealing six walnuts; or that the reverend head master of a public school has severely flogged two boys for being, under difficult circumstances, a moment too late for a train; I make, afresh, to Heaven the vow of my life that I will always be on the resisting side; that I will not deny it my sympathy even

* See Appendix.

when it is in the wrong, feeling deeply, as I do, that resistance for its own sake is necessary, in the face of the fact that the side which holds the power is everywhere so greatly overweighted with it.

III. *According to whose human nature?*—This is a question which, I dare say, turns up more than once in my papers. The Editor will be good enough not to suppress this memorandum, in which I would earnestly avow my consciousness of the differences, in forming estimates of life, which must arise from differences of personal experience. All I can say is, that I have endeavoured to make my own catholic, and to be tolerant in my applications of it. I have seen “good society.” I have been a ragged-school teacher, and a district visitor. I have tried, by the exercise of (what might be called) a sacred curiosity, to make real and vivid to myself the experience of (for instance) convict surgeons, convict chaplains, and naval officers—as well as the state of the world as it exists among other nations, from the highest to the lowest. Doubtless, if I had had the experience of a great traveller, or a great military commander, or an hospital surgeon, or a police magistrate, my own views of things would have been modified. But in the meanwhile I can only contribute what is my own,—catching what side-lights

I can, but certainly not paltering with my own impressions. Thus when I declare, directly or by implication, that life upon lower levels than (for example) that which is partially exemplified in Mr Landor's "Pericles and Aspasia" does not appear to me to be worth the trouble of living, I am just honestly saying what I think and feel in the majority of my moods. In one respect, indeed, I do believe my own experience to have been peculiarly happy. It does appear to me, in moments which I take to be calm and impartial, that I have been privileged to come close to a very few persons of quite exceptional goodness and nobleness. Thus I have been helped to conceive of a greatness and beauty of life which I do *not* observe to be readily imagined by all men. I know very worthy people who are separated, by a gulf which I see with pain to be impassable, from the possibility of conceiving such a type of character as has been made visible in fact before my own eyes, so that I could as soon doubt or deny the sun as *it*. Nay, I must go farther, and say that the bulk of the work of the world appears to me to be in the hands of people who do not and cannot conceive of such types. The reason is simple,—the specimens of the types are few, and it is not the common lot to meet them. We are all to some extent

shut up within our own little beaten bounds. Suggest to your neighbour a great reform in the removal of some restriction which he does not deny to be oppressive, and what will he do? He will foolishly uncover himself,—*stulte nudabit conscientiam animi*,—he will draw a picture of the probable consequences—the picture being founded on his own consciousness of what *he* would be likely to do. It must, however, be ungrudgingly admitted that some very good men, who have lived innocent lives, have strong and correct views of depravities of tendency in which they themselves exhibit no share. These are the class of good men whose conceptions are solely regulative, and who have little imagination or speculative intelligence. Only, let us be just to them; for there *was* a time when I used to think that those who had stronger impressions of human depravity than my own were necessarily making a publication of their own badness. I now correct that opinion by saying, that though I perceive them to be wanting in poetic and speculative power, and in all conceptions but regulative ones, yet, on the other hand, they have grasped a great mass of painful fact which, for myself, I should never have realised without help, and do now habitually realise in a very poor and imperfect manner. All honour to

them, and to their work ; but, for all that, I shall continue to do mine, starting from a conception which is not regulative, but which is needed to supplement theirs.

Thus far this intermediate chapter, though called Words from the Editor, contains more words of my friend's than mine ; but, as I am the medium, the title shall stand ; and I will make a small addition here to what I have already said of him. There are certain particulars, of a suggestive order, in which I observe he has severely chastised his manuscripts ; but in spite of that, and in spite, too, of the way in which he occasionally depreciates existence, he was, according to my own observation of him, so keenly sensitive to the beauty and interest of human life, considered as picture and story, that I should fancy he must have taken some means of expressing his delight in it. " Bless me ! what a great man this Pocourante must be ! nothing pleases him ! " was, with my friend, a favourite quotation from Voltaire, applied to people who could not enjoy things ; and there was, I think, nothing of the pocourante about Henry Holbeach.

But not to detain the reader over comparatively

indifferent matters about a man whom it is not permitted to me to make really *living* to them, with all his wrongness and rightness about him, I will now request them to pass on to the "Controversial Letters" which follow.

A great many ingenious reasons might be suggested in reply to the question why Mr Holbeach so often wrote what he had to say in the form of letters. I suspect the chief reason was, that the epistolary style is not so arduous as that of the treatise. But no doubt he took a pleasure in writing to a man without feeling any certainty that he would ever see what was written. It was like sending up a paper in a fire-balloon, or putting one into a bottle at sea, in delicious uncertainty whether it would ever reach its address or not. My friend was fond of anything in which the exact and the inexact were mingled.

END OF VOL. I.

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